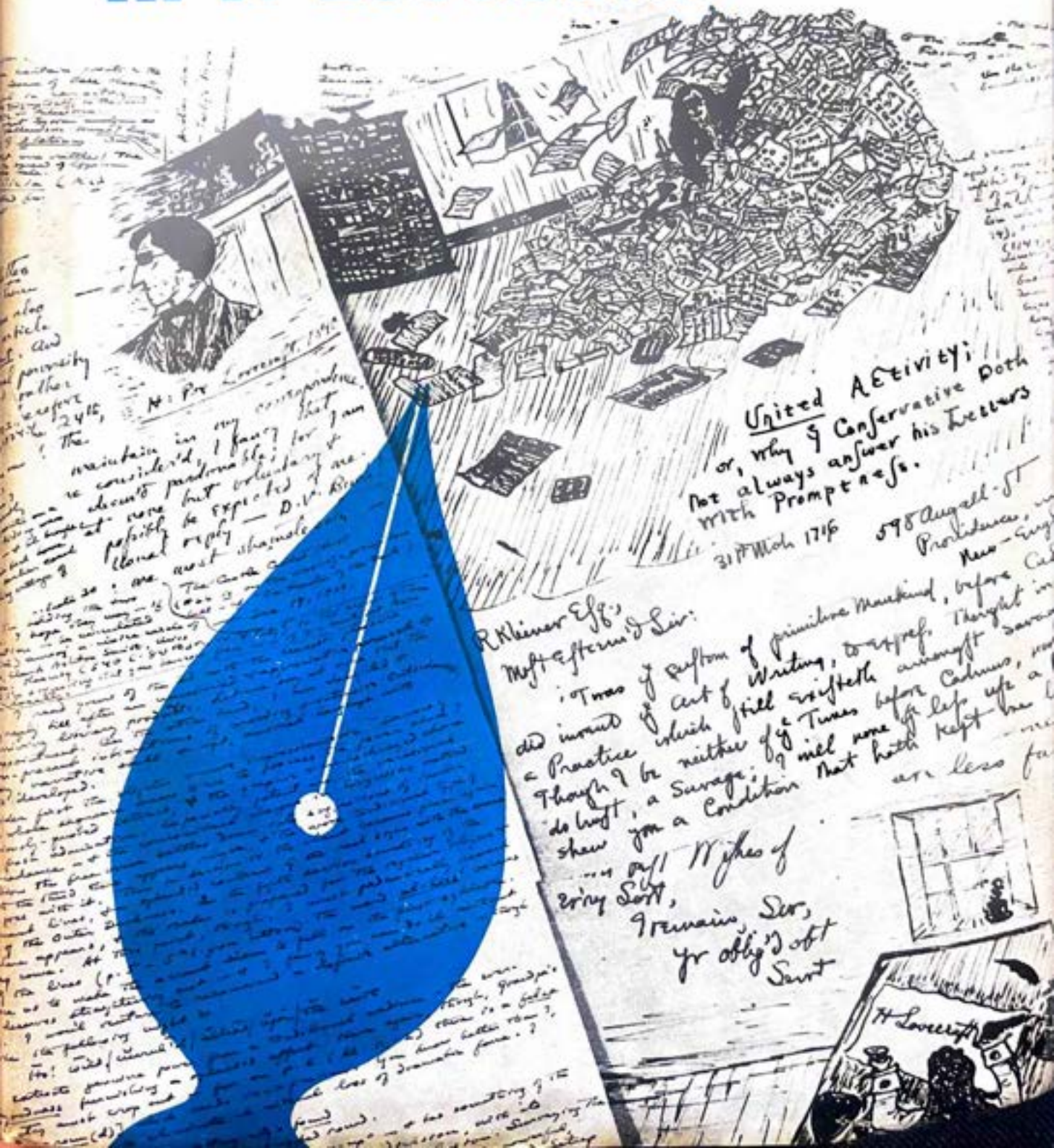
Selected Letters

H. P. Lovecraft



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SELECTED LETTERS I

1911-1924

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

The assembling and editing of the letters of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft has taken August Derleth and Donald Wandrei more than a quarter of a century. Lovecraft wrote so voluminously to his correspondents that comprehensiveness in the published letters was neither desirable nor possible, and the editors found it necessary to edit and re-edit time and again.

Lovecraft was certainly one of the great epistolarians, one of the most erudite correspondents, writing in a pattern that added up to attenuated conversations. He emerges in his letters as a man who has come to terms with life within his limitations, one devoted to Eighteenth Century England as much as to his native Providence, Rhode Island, where he spent a relatively solitary childhood, beset by uncertain health, and driven by solitude to create worlds of his own, beginning with Greek and Roman mythology and ending with the macabre Cthulhu Mythos.

A major writer in a minor division of American literature, Lovecraft had a poor opinion of his work and little market for it; he was forced to support himself by revision work—a labor of the most menial kind in literary annals. Among his diversions were imaginative books, architecture, and an abiding interest in antiquarian New England, an interest later extended to old cities of the continent, from St. Augustine to Quebec.

This first volume of the Lovecraft letters begins in 1911, when Lovecraft was 21, and ends in 1924, at the time of the dissolution of his brief marriage.

SELECTED LETTERS

Books by H. P. Lovecraft

THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS
BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP
MARGINALIA
SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE
THE DUNWICH HORROR AND OTHERS
AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS AND OTHER NOVELS
SOMETHING ABOUT CATS AND OTHER PIECES
THE SHUTTERED ROOM AND OTHER PIECES
DAGON AND OTHER MACABRE TALES

With August Derleth

THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD
THE SURVIVOR AND OTHERS

H. P. LOVECRAFT

SELECTED LETTERS
1911–1924

Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei

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1965

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PREFACE

WHEN Howard Phillips Lovecraft died in 1937, we decided solely on the basis of our own cherished correspondence from him to compile and publish his letters, once his fiction and poetry had been printed. We believed it possible that his ultimate fame might rest fully as much upon his letters as upon his tales of supernatural horror, for his niche in the domain of the macabre in American literature seems secure.

We wrote to his known correspondents, outlining our project. Through the months and the years that followed we received parcels and bundles of letters in such quantity as to require the fulltime service of a stenographer merely to copy the portions edited from them. It became obvious that virtually every individual who had ever had occasion to write to Lovecraft had prized and preserved his letters and postcards. It also became evident that by far the majority of his epistolary output not only still existed but amounted to an unprecedented total, beyond anything we had imagined when we undertook the project.

The work of compiling, arranging, and re-editing the letters continued for a full quarter-century. Eventually more than fifty typescript-volumes, each of approximately a hundred pages of single-space typing, were copied from the Lovecraft letters alone, apart from countless postcards that he sent out from various sites of his antiquarian explorations into Colonial America—Salem, Marblehead, Newport, Providence, Boston, New York, Charleston, St. Augustine, and by-ways of pre-revolutionary New England. A full set of these transcribed letters is destined for deposit with the John Hay Library at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, where many of Lovecraft's original letters are preserved.

Lovecraft was not familiar to the general public during his lifetime.

He was known chiefly to the readers of *Weird Tales, Astounding Stories,* and *Amazing Stories,* magazines which had published the bulk of his macabre fiction. Why, then, did his correspondents so zealously preserve his letters? Rarely in the long history of epistolography has there been such a spontaneous tribute by so many recipients to the literary style, the scholarly knowledge, and the special characteristics of one author's letters.

Even in their merely physical aspects, Lovecraft's letters were noteworthy. Except for a few pertaining to business matters which were typewritten, they were invariably holographic, penned in a small but legible easily-flowing script. Lovecraft habitually covered both sides of a sheet to the edges, leaving no area of unused space. On occasion he would draw a diagram, the outside of a house, a floor plan, or otherwise embellish a letter with sktechwork, but he made no claim to any talent at drawing or art. Quite often he dated his letters in the Eighteenth Century, with which he had so strong a feeling of identification, or used characters of the Greek alphabet for his signature, as in his correspondence with Kleiner, printed in this book in the Latin equivalent as "Theobaldus". Latin phrases frequently occur, for next to Eighteenth Century England he felt a strong kinship with classical Rome, the Rome of Augustus and the Caesars. Sometimes he drew signs of cabalistic ritual or magic, or the characters of a Russian word, or even strange whorls and seriphs of some unknown language of his own invention. These peculiarities of his letters have not proved feasible to carry over into the printed text.

During a summer afternoon in 1927, with a friend in Roger Williams Park in Providence, Lovecraft took with him a briefcase and, while resting on a park bench, was observed to write four postcards and five letters of two to four sheets each in a period of about two hours. He often mentioned to friends and correspondents that he penned an average of fifteen letters per day in addition to postcards.

Some of his letters, however, extended to thirty, forty, fifty or more sheets of typing paper, closely covered on both sides—single epistles that required days to complete and amounted to 60,000 words or more—the equivalent of a 200-page book. These extended missives were usually travelogues, the pro or con side of a debate on matters of philosophic inquiry or historical verity, or the elaboration of especially well-developed nightmares.

Lovecraft habitually wrote letters with direct and effortless spontaneity. He never made first drafts to be copied and polished before mailing, or kept copies for his own files. But where long and detailed epistles were projected, he used a brief memorandum as a guide, listing in order the principal subjects to be covered, and noting ancillary enclosures. He did, however, write down for his own use full accounts of tours he made through various sites preserving colonial architecture, and some exceptionally long and vivid nightmares. When occasion warranted, he simply copied verbatim these formal essays and memorable personal experiences, embedding them in context in the structure of more than one epistle.

His extraordinary feeling of identification with Eighteenth Century England led him for his own aesthetic satisfaction to employ the spellings and usages of that era. His letters therefore habitually contain spellings like "civilisation, honour, traffick, enthus'd", the ampersand symbol for "and", and the long letter "S" typical of Eighteenth Century holographs and books.

In later years, he tried to reduce the heavy burden of correspondence that occupied more than half of each day's work, by delayed mailings and shorter replies of fewer pages on small-size writing tablets. Several of his friends, aware of the excessive diversion of energy into epistolary channels, and wishing to help free him from extraneous tasks so that he could devote more time to the creation of new tales of cosmic horror, voluntarily refrained from answering his letters until weeks had passed. But for every exchange of correspondence that dwindled, a new one began as admirers of his stories wrote to him with inquiries and requests.

Yet Lovecraft himself apparently had little awareness of the immense total of his letters. And nowhere among them, or in the recollection of living persons who knew him, did he show that he attached any value to them or gave a thought to their ever being preserved, compiled, and published. On the contrary, when one of the various friends who visited him in Providence in 1927 remarked that his letters were kept in permanent file, he seemed both astonished and a little amused, and said that he himself seldom retained any letters he received, adding that letters were, after all, but one form of social conversation.

This expressed attitude—of looking upon letters as a kind of conversation, is perhaps the basic explanation for his vast output of them.

They were in large part substitutes for the dialogues he too often lacked, and the reasons for their existence stem from the basic fabric of his life.

His own thorough account of his genealogy, childhood, and biography to 1915 are printed in a letter to Reinhardt Kleiner, under date of November 16, 1916, included here. In brief outline, he was born August 20, 1890, the only child of Winfield Lovecraft and Sarah S. Phillips, in the Phillips home at 494 Angell Street, in Providence. A precocious and gifted child of vivid imagination, he learned the alphabet at two, before five was reading incessantly in the well-stocked family library, and by seven years of age was practising the writing out of his own deeds of adventure and daring-do.

In 1892 his father broke down—Lovecraft believed of a paralytic stroke, but hospital records indicate paresis: he died in hospital in 1898. Lovecraft himself was of frail health, beset by nervous tensions, frequent and prolonged headaches, insomnia, and nightmares. But he was born with an intense curiosity, a thirst for knowledge, a superior intellect, and a phenomenal memory. He never forgot anything he experienced or read in the world of reality, or dreamed in the deeps of his nightmares. He could recall, many years after an event, not only the persons present, their clothing and conversation, but the smell and taste of foods, the touch of objects, the sounds of music or voices. He remembered similarly his dreams in their entirety of color, sound, taste, touch and smell as completely as were they actual occurrences.

Because of his poor health, his school attendance was erratic. He received his grammar-school education at the Slater Avenue School in Providence, where he became engrossed in chemistry and astronomy. But his indifferent health prevented him from making the usual childhood friends or partaking in games, and his own rapid progress in reading and writing beyond his years gave him both a satisfactory substitute for social activities and a preference for the company of adults. He was thus for long periods a solitary child, though not a lonely one, reading incessantly or writing of lurid adventures in his fiction, writing of scientific fact in articles on chemistry, astronomy, and history. On one hand he sought knowledge, truth, and facts about the universe; on the other he devised imaginative escapes from reality.

He entered Hope Street High School in 1908, but ill-health again caused prolonged absences. His first printed work, an attack on astrology,

was published in the Providence *Sun-Journal* for June 30, 1906. In August, 1906, he began contributing a monthly astronomical article to the Providence *Tribune*.

After graduation from high school, Lovecraft should have matriculated at Brown University, but the uncertainty of his health prevented it; his formal education had ended. Still prey to headaches, insomnia, and general nervous weakness, and with an allergy to cold temperatures that made it physically dangerous for him to venture outdoors when the mercury fell below 20° Fahrenheit, he continued to live largely in seclusion, reading and writing. He felt himself an outsider in his time, with an affinity for the Eighteenth Century as though he had been born two centuries too late.

Lovecraft had written and destroyed many detective stories and supernatural tales since childhood. But after his articles on astronomy began to appear, he ceased writing fiction, and in 1908 burned the remainder of his youthful stories, save for two, which he preserved as "tolerable" examples of his juvenilia.

In 1914 a new window to the world opened to him. He became a member of the United Amateur Press Association which, with its rival, the National Amateur Press Association, were precursors of the little magazines of the years to come. They were made up of aspiring authors, poets, journalists, printers, and private press publishers, many of whom were able to print their own work as well as that of fellow-members. Through the United, and its own official publication of the same name, Lovecraft began to make new friends, and to attend meetings of members in the Boston area, where he met Miss Winifred V. Jackson and Mrs. Anne Renshaw.

He had for several years been writing verses, often satires, in the Eighteenth Century mode of heroic couplets. Some of these now began to make their appearance in the pages of the amateur press magazines or in annuals and booklets issued by members of the United Amateur Press Association. Through the Association, he became acquainted with the printer-author W. Paul Cook, who persuaded him to resume the writing of fiction, the first results of which were *The Tomb* and *Dagon* in 1917.

Through the United he also began to turn to literary revision for others as a source of income, and thus added further to his increasing list of correspondents that now included Maurice W. Moe, a high

school English teacher of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Ira A. Cole, a ranchman in western Kansas; Reinhardt Kleiner, a poet, Frank Belknap Long, author-poet, and Mrs. Sonia H. Greene, also an author, all of New York; James F. Morton, Rhodes Scholar and Curator of the Paterson Museum; Samuel Loveman, the poet-bibliophile of Cleveland; and Moe's precocious pupil, Alfred Galpin, of Appleton, Wisconsin.

Lovecraft's mother died in 1921 after a long decline, and his aunts, Annie E. Phillips Gamwell and Mrs. F. C. Clark, to both of whom he was devoted, became his closest relatives, and to them he now wrote lengthy letters whenever he was away from Providence.

Apart from revision work for clients, Lovecraft continued to write new tales of fantasy and terror. The advent of a magazine oddly named *Home Brew* in 1921 provided him a market for publication of *Herbert West: Reanimator,* written at the behest of the publisher, a recruit from amateur pressdom. By this time Lovecraft had begun to make short trips of exploration through colonial towns near Providence, but it was not until 1922 that he made his first long trip—to Cleveland to visit Samuel Loveman, who showed him the drawings and poetry of Clark Ashton Smith, the California fantaisist. Entranced by Smith's work and the discovery of a kindred soul, Lovecraft wrote a letter of appreciation to which Smith's reply launched another lifelong exchange of correspondence.

When the magazine *Weird Tales* began publication in 1923, Lovecraft for the first time knew a specialized market suitable for his horror stories, and after the editor accepted his *Dagon,* he found the stimulus for writing new fiction. Additional acceptances by *Weird Tales,* and a promising future outlook led him to move to New York in March, 1924, where he married Mrs. Sonia H. Greene. The Lovecrafts took up residence in Brooklyn.

Almost at once, all prospects vanished. Mrs. Greene's millinery shop collapsed as a business venture. *Weird Tales* went heavily into debt and came close to bankruptcy before new financing and a change in editorial direction revived it. By August, the financial plight of the Lovecrafts had become serious. Lovecraft's efforts to find work were unstinting. He answered "Help Wanted" advertisements and himself inserted this advertisement in the *New York Times*—

> WRITER AND REVISER, free-lance, desires regular and permanent salaried connection with any responsible enterprise requiring literary services; exceptionally thorough experience in preparing correct and fluent text on subjects assigned, and in meeting the most difficult, intricate and extensive problems of rewriting and constructive revision, prose or verse; would also consider situation dealing with such proofreading as demands rapid and discriminating perception, orthographical accuracy, stylistic fastidiousness and a keenly developed sense of the niceties of English usage; age 34, married; has for seven years handled all the prose and verse of a leading American public speaker and editor.

At the same time he composed and circulated this letter:

> Dear Sir:—
>
> If an unprovoked application for employment seems somewhat unusual in these days of system, agencies, & advertising, I trust that the circumstances surrounding this one may help to mitigate what would otherwise be obtrusive forwardness. The case is one wherein certain definitely marketable aptitudes must be put forward in an unconventional manner if they are to override the current fetish which demands commercial experience & causes prospective employers to dismiss unheard the application of any situation-seeker unable to boast of specific professional service in a given line.
>
> The notion that not even a man of cultivation & good intelligence can possibly acquire rapid effectiveness in a field ever so slightly outside his own routine, would seem to be a naive one; yet recent events have shown me most emphatically what a widespread superstition it is. Since commencing, two months ago, a quest for work for which I am naturally & scholastically well fitted, I have answered nearly a hundred advertisements without so much as one chance for a satisfactory hearing—& all, apparently, because I cannot point to previous employment in the precise industrial subdivisions represented by the various firms. Faring thus with the usual channels, I am at last experimentally taking the aggressive.
>
> The situation of which I am in search, & which I believe your establishment might afford, is one where the services of an author, reviser, rewriter, critic, reviewer, correspondent, proofreader, typist, or anything else even remotely of the sort, are required. In these lines I am prepared to display a mature and effective proficiency despite the fact that I have never been systematically employed by another; yet am willing, in deference to custom & necessity, to begin most modestly, & with the small remuneration which novices usually receive. What I wish is an initial foothold; after that I am confident that my work will speak for me.
>
> I am by vocation a writer & reviser—composing original fiction, criticism, & verse, & have had exceptionally thorough experience in preparing correct & fluent text on subjects assigned, or meeting the most difficult & intricate problems of rewriting & constructive revision, prose & verse. . . .
>
> This free-lance industry, however, is obviously uneven & uncertain; & I am now—being married & settled in New York—extremely desirous of

exchanging it for a regular & permanent salaried connection with any responsible enterprise of not too dissimilar nature. That I can adequately fill any ordinary position involving English composition & rhetoric, literary creativeness, & familiarity with typographical forms & practices, seems very clear to me. Experience in the details of any one commercial enterprise I may lack, but I nevertheless believe that I have assets of at least equal value in an ability to compose rapidly, vividly, fluently, & correctly from outlines, notes, or suggestions, & in such qualities as quick & discriminating perception, orthographical accuracy, stylistic fastidiousness, & a keenly developed sense of the niceties of English usage. . . .

Round pegs find round holes, square pegs find square holes. And by the same token, albeit with rather greater difficulty, I am sure that there must somewhere be a corresponding hole for such a peg as proverbial metaphor may dub trapezohedral!

Hoping—rashly or not—to hear from you & to receive a fuller opportunity for displaying my industrial qualifications, I am

Very truly yours

All was in vain. Economic necessity forced the selling of household possessions. His wife became ill and required hospitalization. By November of 1924, in the last letter in this initial volume of the Lovecraft letters, Lovecraft wrote to his aunt, Mrs. Clark, of the impending dissolution of his marriage on the rocks of financial disaster.

Even through that dark time of misfortune, Lovecraft's letters show a stoic fortitude and a detachment as though he were an outsider looking at the tribulations of someone else. He accepted the bitter realities like any other truths. And he recorded them with the same objective, matter-of-fact thoroughness that he gave to happier and more aesthetically satisfying experiences.

Lovecraft's letters were always written as if he were conversing with the person he addressed. His language was the same that he used in actual speech, and those who talked with him vouch that his vocabulary, phrasing, sentences, and orderly methods of discussion were as erudite as his letters, and that his letters were indeed for him but a form of written speech. With few congenial acquaintances in Providence, and limited opportunity for social discourse, he conversed by mail with kindred souls at a distance.

The sheer quantity of his letters made them chronicle, diary, and autobiography. Whatever experiences befell him, and with the cumulative range of his encyclopedic knowledge added to his powers of imagination, he penned in his letters in the same way that other people talk

about the daily events in their lives. His prose style was the natural product of his own particular background, education, reading and temperament. The informal essays on all manner of subjects that abound throughout his correspondence are the offshoots of ingrained habit and literary discipline.

Very likely Lovecraft would have revised and altered his letters extensively if he had foreseen their publication. We have made no alteration or changes in the text reproduced. We present them here as he wrote them. At the end of a very long and arduous task, we believe as we did when we began, that Howard Phillips Lovecraft was one of the world's most interesting epistolarians.

AUGUST DERLETH
DONALD WANDREI

January 7, 1965

SELECTED LETTERS

H. P. Lovecraft

1. TO SARAH PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

Thursday Nov. 30, 1911

Dear Mother:

If, as you start toward Lillies' festive spread,
You find me snoring loudly in my bed,
Awake me not, for I would fain repose,
And through the day in quiet slumbers doze.
But lest I starve, for lack of food to eat,
Leave here a dish of Quaker Puffed Wheat,
Or breakfast biscuit, which, it matters not,
To break my fast when out of bed I've got.
And if to supper you perchance should stay,
Thus to complete a glorious festive day,
Announce the fact to me by telephone,
That whilst you eat, I may prepare my own.

H. P. Lovecraft

Written on Thanksgiving day HPL.
"When I went to Lillies' to dinner & he was asleep—"

2. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
December 8, 1914

Dear Sir:—

Through Mr. Daas, I learn that you would 'like to see me get away from the heroic couplet, and see what I could do in other forms'. I fear that it is quite beyond me thus to leave a form of expression on which I seized almost by instinct, and in which nearly all my rhythmical efforts are cast. As the strength of Antaeus depended on his contact with Mother Earth, so does any possible merit in my verses depend on their execution in this regular and time-honoured measure. Take the form away, and nothing remains. I have no real poetic ability, and all

that saves my verse from utter worthlessness is the care which I bestow on its metrical construction.

. . . . .

Now I am perfectly aware that this is no more than downright perverted taste. I know as well as any man that the beauties of poetry lie not in the tinsel of flowing metre, or the veneer of epigrammatical couplets; but in the real richness of images, delicacy of imagination, and keenness of perception, which are independent of outward form or superficial brilliancy; yet I were false and hypocritical, should I not admit my actual preference for the old resounding decasyllabics. Verily, I ought to be wearing a powdered wig and knee-breeches. I have written in iambic octosyllabics like those of Swift, in decasyllabic quatrains, as in Gray's *Elegy*, in the old ballad metre of Chevy-Chase, in blank verse like Young's and Thomson's, and even in anapaests like those in Beattie's *Hermit*, but only in the formal couplet of Dryden and Pope can I really express myself. Once I privately tried imitations of modern poets, but turned away in distaste. Their vocabulary and technic alike seem utterly strange to an ancient like myself.

I wonder if you care for the science of Astronomy? This has been a source of fascination to me for twelve years—just half my life. For the past eight years, ever since I was sixteen, I have contributed to the local press a series of regular monthly astronomical articles, the two latest of which, from *The Providence Evening News*, I herewith enclose. Recently a quack named Hartmann, a devotee of the pseudo-science of Astrology, commenced to disseminate the usual pernicious fallacies of that occult art through the columns of *The News*, so that in the interests of true Astronomy I was forced into a campaign of invective and satire. I began seriously, with *Science versus Charlatanry*, which I followed up with *The Falsity of Astrology*, but eventually the stupid persistence of the modern Nostradamus forced me to adopt ridicule as my weapon. I thereupon went back to my beloved age of Queen Anne for a precedent, and decided to emulate Dean Swift's famous attacks on the astrologer Partridge, conducted under the nom de plume of Isaac Bickerstaffe (or Bickerstaff—I have seen it spelled both ways). Accordingly I published a satirical article wherein I gave with an air of solemn gravity the most nonsenical collection of wild prophecies that my brain could conceive; the whole entitled *Astrology and the Future*, and signed "Isaac Bickerstaffe, Jr." I there "predicted" the end of the

world by an explosion of internal gases in the year 4954. Hartmann scarce knew whether or not to take me seriously, and kept up his mountebank performances, so I prepared another Bickerstaffe paper whose ridicule should become more open toward the end. In this final effort, *Delavan's Comet and Astrology*, I explained how the human race shall be preserved after the destruction of the earth, by transportation to the planet Venus! Even the obtuse intellect of the charlatan must have discovered the sarcastic nature of this ponderous prophecy, for he has now quietly ceased to inflict his false notions on a gullible public.

Very truly yours,

H. P. Lovecraft.

3. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell Street
Providence, R. I.
January 1, 1915

My Dear Mr. Moe:—

. . . . .

. . . The Lovecrafts were a family of small country gentry in Devonshire. . . . My paternal grandfather, George by name, (whom I never saw) emigrated to Rochester, N. Y., in the first half of the nineteenth century. He later removed to Mount Vernon, N. Y., and married Helen, daughter to Lancelot Allgood, Esq., another English emigrant, of a family whose ancestral seat is the manor of Nunwick, near Hexham, in Northumberland. This union was blessed with three children: Emma, now wife of Mr. Isaac Hill, Principal of the Pelham, N. Y. High School; Mary; and Winfield, father of the present writer. My father was educated both privately, and at a military school, making modern languages his specialty.

Turning to my maternal ancestors, from whom my middle name is derived, we find a typical line of New-England Yankees. The first Phillips of this branch came to Rhode Island from Lincolnshire in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and established himself in the western part of the colony, afterward the town of Foster. My great-

grandfather, Jeremiah Phillips, owned one of the first mills in Foster; and, tragically enough, was killed in its machinery when still a young man, leaving Whipple, my grandfather, a lad of thirteen. My grandfather was educated at the East Greenwich Academy (then called The Providence Conference Seminary) and after a brief career as a teacher in the country schools married his own cousin, Miss Rhoby Place, later building a mill and settling at Greene, R. I. (He himself named the village, since he owned all the land it covered. It was formerly "Coffin's Corner".) The children of Whipple and Rhoby Phillips are Lillian D., now wife of Dr. Franklin C. Clark of Providence; Sarah S., mother of the autobiographer; Edwin E.; and Anna, now wife of Mr. Edward Gamwell, Associate Editor of *The Boston Budget and Beacon*. My mother and Aunt Lillian were both educated at Wheaton Seminary in Norton, Massachusetts, and are both accomplished landscape painters in oil. My Aunt Lillian also attended the State Normal School, and was for some time a teacher. In 1873 my grandfather disposed of his estate and interests at Greene, and removed to Providence, where he entered into the real estate business. At the time of his death in 1904 he was President of The Owyhee Land and Irrigation Co., an Idaho corporation.

Sarah S. Phillips and Winfield Lovecraft were married on June 12, 1889, and on August 20, 1890, the only child, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, was born at the Phillips home, No. 454 Angell Street, Providence. The Lovecrafts soon afterward took up their residence in Auburndale, Massachusetts. . . .

. . . . .

In 1893 my father was seized with a complete paralytic stroke, due to insomnia and an overstrained nervous system, which took him to the hospital for the remaining five years of his life. He was never afterward conscious, and my image of him is but vague. This of course disrupted all plans for the future, caused the sale of the home site in Auburndale, and the return of my mother and myself to the Phillips home in Providence. Here I spent all the best years of my childhood. The house was a beautiful and spacious edifice, with stable and grounds, the latter approaching a park in the beauty of the walks and trees.

As a child I was very peculiar and sensitive, always preferring the society of grown persons to that of other children. I could not keep

away from printed matter. I had learned the alphabet at two, and at four could read with ease, though making most absurd errors in the pronunciation of the long words I loved so well. At five I added penmanship to the list of my accomplishments. Amongst my few playmates I was very unpopular, since I would insist on playing out events in history, or acting according to consistent plots. Thus repelled by humans, I sought refuge and companionship in books, and here was I doubly blessed. The library was stocked with the best volumes accumulated both by the Phillipses and the Lovecrafts, including a good many tomes over a century old, and bearing on the fly-leaves such inscriptions as "Tho. Lovecraft, Gent. His Book, 1787", or "Stephen Place's Book, bought by Him in Boston, May 1805". My maternal grandmother, who died when I was six, was a devoted lover of astronomy, having made that subject a specialty at Lapham Seminary, where she was educated; and though she never personally showed me the beauties of the skies, it is to her excellent but somewhat obsolete collection of astronomical books that I owe my affection for celestial science. Her copy of Burritt's *Geography of the Heavens* is today the most prized volume in my library.

Grimm's *Fairy Tales* were my delight until at the age of seven I chanced upon Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*. Then and there began an undying passion for classical mythology, which was soon increased by Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*. All the world became ancient Greece to me; I looked for Naiades in the fountain on the lawn, and forebore to break the shrubbery for fear of harming the Dryades. My attempts at versification, of which I made the first at the age of six, now took on a crude, internally rhyming ballad metre, and I sang of the exploits of Gods and Heroes. . . . About this time I tried attendance at school, but was unable to endure the routine.

Naturally, the quotations in Bulfinch led me to a perusal of the classics in translation, and in particular of that marvellous literary mosaic known as *Garth's Ovid*. This is of course wholly in heroic couplets, Dryden and Addison contributing the best parts. The even decasyllabic rhythm seemed to strike some responsive chord in my brain, and I forthwith became wedded to that measure in which most of my subsequent poetical efforts were cast. I now sought everything within my reach that pertained to the age of the classical translators. The books

which I used were not modern reprints, but musty old volumes written with "long s's". By some freak of childish perversity, I began to use long s's myself, and to date everything two centuries back. I would sign myself "H. Lovecraft, Gent., 1698", etc. Latin came quite naturally to me, and in other studies my mother, aunts, and grandfather helped me greatly. To my grandfather I owe much. He had travelled extensively in Europe, and was forever delighting me with accounts of London, Paris, and Rome. His graphic description of the ruins of Pompeii produced a particularly strong impression on me, since I was always fond of musing over past granduer.

When I was ten I set to work to delete every modern word from my vocabulary, and to this end adopted an old Walker's Dictionary (1804) which was for some time my sole authority. All the Queen Anne authors combined to form my literary diet. About this period I developed an interest in the science of Chemistry, and established a laboratory in the cellar. Later on I became fairly proficient in elementary chemical analysis. At the age of twelve my style both in prose and verse was so far formed, that I think you could recognise my workmanship after reading my present efforts.

In 1902 I tried school again, this time with greater success, for I succeeded in graduating from the grammar grades. In January, 1903, astronomy began to engross me completely. I procured a small telescope, and surveyed the heavens constantly. Not one clear night passed without long observation on my part, and the practical, first-hand knowledge thus acquired has ever since been of the highest utility to me in my astronomical writing. In August 1903 (though I knew nothing of the press associations) I commenced to publish an amateur paper called *The R. I. Journal of Astronomy*, writing it by hand, and duplicating it on a hectograph. This I continued for four years, first as a weekly, later as a monthly. I was now under the instruction of a private tutor.

My two uncles-in-law, Dr. Clark and Mr. Gamwell, both Brown University men, stimulated my intellectual activities immensely. Dr. Clark is a physician and student of the highest type, whose articles have had a wide circulation in medical journals, whilst Mr. Gamwell is an editor and all-around literary man of very thorough scholarship.

In 1904 the death of my beloved maternal grandfather broke up the home at 454 Angell St., and caused my mother and myself to take our present smaller quarters at No. 598 on the same thoroughfare. Here I

was brought into closer contact with the Rev. James Pyke and his aged mother, both poets, whom we had always known, but who were now our next-door neighbors. Mr. Pyke could scarcely approve my old-fashioned style in writing, yet admitted that I could only with difficulty leave a mode of expression so spontaneous and natural to me.

In the same year I entered the Hope Street High School, where I found an admirable staff of teachers, each one of keenest sympathy and understanding for an awkward, nervous and retiring youth. For a year and a half I followed the full curriculum, but during the remainder of my attendance was forced by ill health to absent myself for long periods, and to piece out as good a special course as pedagogical ingenuity might devise. I was particularly devoted to Latin, Ancient History, Physics, and Chemistry.

Meanwhile (1906) I had "broken into print". My first printed piece was a brief attack on astrology, quite like my present work in that direction, published in *The Providence Sunday Journal*. In August, 1906, I commenced a series of monthly astronomical articles in *The Providence Tribune*, and began to contribute miscellany to *The Pawtuxet Valley Gleaner*, a country paper which my mother's family had taken years before when they lived at Greene. Later I changed my monthly articles from *The Tribune* to *The News* (where I obtained more favourable space) and was deprived of my other medium through its failure and discontinuance.

In 1908 I should have entered Brown University, but the broken state of my health rendered the idea absurd. I was and am a prey to intense headaches, insomnia, and general nervous weakness which prevents my continuous application to any thing. For a time I tried a correspondence course in chemistry, but soon realised that regular duties were not for me.

. . . Though I love to hear music, I have no true musical taste; I studied the violin for two years, but could not bear the monotony of practice. In pictorial art I am utterly unversed. Of Greek I have only the barest rudiments, and but little more of French. German repelled me so much that I know nothing of it. The few words of Spanish which I know are of little more consequence, though I love the stately Castillian pronunciation. Mathematics I detest, and only a supreme effort of the will gained for me the highest marks in Algebra and Geometry at school. In everything I am behind the times. Contemporary

literature and drama are a mere blank to me, whilst modern political and social ideals are equally alien. I cannot even now excuse the revolution of America from England, and through the influence of heredity am at heart an Englishman despite my American birth. My knowledge of the world is no more than could be expected from one reared in seclusion; I have never been outside the three states of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut! . . .

. . . . .

I remain, as ever,
Your obt. servt.
H. P. Lovecraft

4. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
January 16, 1915

My dear Mr. Moe:—

. . . . .

My theological beliefs are likely to startle one who has imagined me an orthodox adherent of the Anglican Church. My father was of that faith, and was married by its rites, yet, having been educated in my mother's distinctively Yankee family, I was early placed in the Baptist sunday school. There, however, I soon became exasperated by the literal Puritanical doctrines, and constantly shocked my preceptors by expressing scepticism of much that was taught me. It became evident that my young mind was not of a religious cast, for the much exhorted "simple faith" in miracles and the like came not to me. I was not long forced to attend the Sunday school, but read much in the Bible from sheer interest. The more I read the Scriptures, the more foreign they seemed to me. I was infinitely fonder on the Graeco-Roman mythology, and when I was eight astounded the family by declaring myself a Roman pagan. Religion struck me so vague a thing at best, that I could perceive no advantage of any one system over any other. I had really adopted a sort of Pantheism, with the Roman gods as personified attributes of deity. . . .

My present opinions waver betwixt Pantheism and rationalism. I am a sort of agnostic, neither affirming nor denying anything. . . .

I remain
very sincerely yours
H. P. Lovecraft,

5. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

March 28, 1915

My dear Mr. Kleiner:—

I am certainly a relic of the 18th century both in prose and in verse. My taste in poetry is really defective, for I love nothing better than the resounding couplets of Dryden and Pope, unless it be the stately phraseology of Thomson's *Seasons*. In prose, I have read less of the novelists than of the essayists and historians. I suppose I picked up my peculiar style from Addison, Steele, Johnson, and Gibbon.

I have absolutely no use for modern forms or tendencies, and am firmly of opinion that the English language has done nothing but decline since the formal school of composition disappeared. The romantic movement in poetry is a vague unreality to me. I admire the later poets because they are considered admirable and I am supposed to admire them; but inwardly I cannot be weaned away from my old-fashioned couplets. You will soon see in Daas's forthcoming paper, *Here and There*, a specimen of my earlier, rougher verse, written several years ago in the style of Dryden, with many rhymes which are merely allowable, and with a free use of triplets and Alexandrines.

I remain
Very sincerely yours,
HP Lovecraft

6. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

August 10, 1915

My dear Kleiner:—

From your hint regarding Isaacson I imagine that my reply will differ *very much* from the apologetic form! I can almost predict his

line of attack. He will call me superficial, crude, barbaric in thought, imperfect in education, offensively arrogant and bigoted, filled with venomous prejudice, wanting in good taste, etc. etc. etc. But what I can and will say in reply is also violent and comprehensive. He will ask why I am an advocate of war, yet am not at this moment in the British army. I shall not stoop to explain that I am an invalid who would certainly be fighting under the Union Jack if able, but shall have plenty to say about the decadent cowardice responsible for the propagation of peace ideas. Peace is the ideal of a dying nation; a broken race. . . .

I remain
Very sincerely yours,
HP Lovecraft

7. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Sept. 14, 1915

My dear Kleiner:—

Impromptu verse, or "poetry" to order, is easy only when approached in the coolly *prosaic* spirit. Given something to say, a *metrical mechanic* like myself can easily hammer the matter into technically correct verse, substituting formal poetic diction for real inspiration of thought. For instance, I lately received a post-card bearing the picture of swans on a placid stream. Desiring to reply in appropriate verse, I harked back to the classic myth of Phaëthon and Cygnus, handling it as follows:

On Receiving a Picture of Swans

With pensive grace, the melancholy Swan
Mourns o'er the tomb of luckless Phaëthon;
On grassy banks the weeping poplars wave,
And guard with tender care the wat'ry grave.
Would that I might, should I too proudly claim
An Heav'nly parent, or a God-like fame;
When flown too high, and dash'd to depths below,
Receive such tribute as a Cygnus' woe!

The faithful bird, that dumbly floats along,
Sighs all the deeper for his want of song.

(This required about 10 minutes for composition.)

I remain
Your obt. Servt.
HPLovecraft

8. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Sept. 30, 1915

My dear Kleiner:—

Your *Mary of the Movies* is delightful—so much so that it has inspired me to compose the following companion-poem, dedicated to another illustrious screen entertainer:

To Charlie of the Comics

You trip and tumble o'er the sheet
That holds your lifelike image.
You shuffle your prodigious feet
Through love-scene, chase, or scrimmage.
As, gazing on each comic act,
I stare at your perfection,
I find it hard to face the fact
That you're a mere projection.

I've seen you as an artist rare,
With brush and paint-smear'd palette;
I've seen you fan the empty air
With ill-intention'd mallet.
I've watch'd you woo a winsome fay,
(You must a dream to her be)
But ne'er have caught you in a play
Without that cane and derby!

Dear lad, I trust your happiness
May be like that you give us;

And since ripe years the mirthful bless,
That you may long outlive us.
May you the smiles of Fortune see,
Nor know what want of cash is,
And may your times of trouble be
As short as your moustaches!

I'd like to meet you, Charles, old chap,
Though vast the space dividing;
Yet I must merely sit and clap
At your fantastic gliding.
But though you're far away, we know,
You still have pow'r to rouse us:
Your films can pack a picture-show
That's roomy as your trousers!

How is this for a 15-minute impromptu? You need not criticise the "rouse us"—"trousers" rhyme—it is not meant to be perfect—merely *allowable*.

Unda
Or, *The Bride of the Sea.*

Respectfully Dedicated without Permission to
MAURICE WINTER MOE, Esq.

A Dull, Dark, Drear, Dactylic Delirium in Sixteen Silly,
Senseless, Sickly Stanzas

($5000.00 Reward for the Apprehension, Alive or Dead, of the Person or Persons who can prove that This is the Work of

HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT

—o—o—

"Ego, canis, lunam cano".
MAEVIUS BAVIANUS.

—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—o—

Black loom the crags of the uplands behind me.
Dark are the sands of the far-stretching shore.

Dim are the pathways and rocks that remind me
Sadly of years in the lost nevermore.

Soft laps the ocean on wave-polish'd boulder;
Sweet is the sound and familiar to me.
Here, with her head gently bent to my shoulder,
Walk'd I with Unda, the Bride of the Sea.

Bright was the morn of my youth when I met her,
Sweet as the breeze that blew in o'er the brine.
Swift was I captur'd in Love's strongest fetter,
Glad to be hers, and she glad to be mine.

Never a question ask'd I whence she wander'd,
Never a question ask'd she of my birth:
Happy as children, we thought not nor ponder'd,
Glad with the bounty of ocean and earth.

Once when the moonlight play'd soft 'mid the billows,
High on the cliff o'ver the waters we stood.
Bound was her hair with a garland of willows,
Pluck'd by the fount in the bird-haunted wood.

Strangely she gaz'd on the surges beneath her,
Charm'd by the sound, or entranc'd by the light.
Then did the waves a wild aspect bequeath her,
Stern as the ocean and weird as the night.

Coldly she left me, astonish'd and weeping,
Standing alone 'mid the regions she bless'd:
Down, ever downward, half gliding, half creeping,
Stole the sweet Unda in oceanward quest.

Calm grew the sea, and tumultuous beating
Turn'd to a ripple, as Unda the fair
Trod the wet sands in affectionate greeting,
Beckon'd to me, and no longer was there!

Long did I pace by the banks where she vanish'd:
High climb'd the moon, and descended again.

Grey broke the dawn till the sad night was banish'd,
Still ach'd my soul with its infinite pain.

All the wide world have I search'd for my darling,
Scour'd the far deserts and sail'd distant seas.
Once on the wave while the tempest was snarling,
Flash'd fair face that brought quiet and ease.

Ever in restlessness onward I stumble,
Seeking and pining, scarce heeding my way,
Now have I stray'd where the wide waters rumble,
Back to the scene of the lost yesterday.

Lo! the red moon from the ocean's low hazes
Rises in ominous grandeur to view,
Strange is its face as my tortur'd eye gazes
O'er the vast reaches of sparkle and blue.

Straight from the moon to the shore where I'm sighing
Grows a bright bridge, made of wavelets and beams,
Frail may it be, yet how simple the trying;
Wand'ring from earth to the orb of sweet dreams.

What is yon face in the moonlight appearing;
Have I at last found the maiden that fled?
Out on the beam-bridge my footsteps are nearing
Her whose sweet beckoning hastens my tread.

Currents surround me, and drowsily swaying,
Far on the moon-path I seek the sweet face.
Eagerly hasting, half panting, half praying,
Forward I reach for the vision of grace.

Murmuring waters about me are closing,
Soft the sweet vision advances to me:
Done are my trials; my heart is reposing
Safe with my Unda, the Bride of the Sea.

I remain

Very Sincerely yours,

HPLovecraft

9. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Nov. 25, 1915

My dear Kleiner:—

Morton is a problem. . . . He has doubtless been criticised very roughly himself, and thereby made bitter toward men of conservative ideas. I understand that he overstudied in Harvard, taking a Master's degree in the same time that most young men take only Bachelor's honours. He has thought too much—overreached sane human limitations. I respect James F. Morton, Jr., no matter how much he reviles, for his has been a life of conscientious research and unceasing mental endeavor. . . . He is to be tolerated gently, and his declining years must not be vexed with any more criticism than is demanded by the self-defence of his victims. I can sympathize with Morton in many ways. I am not an orthodox disciple of religion, but I deem it dangerous to tamper with any system so manifestly beneficial to morality. Whatever may be the faults of the church, it has never yet been surpassed or nearly equalled as an agent for the promotion of virtue. And the same thing applies to our present social system. It has its defects, but is evidently a natural growth, and better fitted to preserve an approximate civilization than any Utopian scheme conjured up over night by some artifically thinking radical. As to races, I deem it most proper to recognise the divisions into which Nature has grouped mankind. Science shows us the infinite superiority of the Teutonic Aryan over all others, and it therefore becomes us to see that his ascendancy shall remain undisputed. Any racial mixture can but lower the result. The Teutonic race, whether in Scandinavia, other parts of the continent, England, or America, is the cream of humanity, and its wanton and deliberate adulteration with baser material is even more repulsive to consider than the elaborately staged racial suicide now being conducted, wherein Germanic and Britannic Teutons are striving to annihilate each other instead of uniting against the Mongol-tainted Slav or menacing Orental. . . .

Sometimes I think of racial combinations as chemical reactions; for instance, I believe that certain stocks have greater assimilative powers than others. The Gallo-Basque stock with Latin infusion, which consti-

tutes the bulk of the French population, is much more receptive to alien blood than is our colder and more Northern Teutonic stock. . . .

I remain

Sincerely and fraternally,

HPLovecraft.

10. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

My dear Kleiner:— Dec. 6, 1915

And the more I study the question, the more firmly am I convinced that the one supreme race is the Teuton. Observe the condition in the British Isles. The English are wholly Teutonic, and therefore dominant. The southern Scotch and Eastern Irish are also of that blood—they certainly surpass their fellows to the north and west. The Welsh, who have no Teutonic blood, are of little account. Had it not been for the Teutonic infusion at the beginning of the Dark Ages, southern Europe would have been lost. Who were these early "French" kings and heroes that founded French civilisation? Teutons, to a man! . . . Who were the Normans? Teutons of the North. It is pitiful to me to hear apostles of equality pipe out that other races can equal this foremost of all—this successor to the Roman race in power and virility.

As you surmise, I am a devotee of the motion picture, since I can attend shows at any time, whereas my ill health seldom permits me to make definite engagements or purchase real theatre tickets in advance. Some modern films are really worth seeing, though when I first knew moving pictures their only value was to destroy time. Chaplin is infinitely amusing—too good for the rather vulgar films he used to appear in—and I hope he will in future be an exponent of more refined comedy. I saw the film *Trilby*, but it seemed incomplete to me because I have seen the actual play, and have attached so much importance to the deep, fiendishly insinuating *voice* of Svengali.

. . . . .

I always wanted to be able to draw, but I have no talent, and in one of my pictures you cannot tell a cow from a locomotive. But spurred on by your example, I have just been trying my hand and fountain pen in an endeavour to represent myself just as I would like to be—a poet

of two centuries ago, periwig and all. As you will note, I have adopted the old frontispiece engraving style, with little Pegasuses beneath me, and Apollo, Pan, and my family crest above me. How would that look facing the title page of a book of heroic verse? I should really feel at ease in that garb, for my spirit seems actually to be living in 1715 rather than 1915. . . . The fact is, I was born 200 years too late. . . .

With best wishes, I remain, Sir,

Your most obt. humble servt.,

H. P. Lovecraft

11. TO REINHARDT KLEINER Jan. 20, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

Regarding early reading, I am able to say that our tastes in childhood were even more similar than you imagine. When I was about twelve I became greatly interested in science, specialising in geography, (later to be displaced by astronomy), and being a Verne enthusiast. In those days I used to write fiction, and many of my tales showed the literary influence of the immortal Jules. I wrote one story about that side of the moon which is forever turned away from us—using, for fictional purposes—the Hausen theory that air and water still exist there as the result of an abnormal centre of gravity in the moon. I hardly need add that the theory is really exploded—I even was aware of that fact at the time—but I desired to compose a "thriller". Some day I may take up fiction in the amateur press—revealing a side of my nature hitherto concealed from the United. When I write stories, Edgar Allan Poe is my model. I never choose normal subjects, and frequently deal with the supernatural. Only four persons in the association have seen any of my fiction—these being Misses Ballou and Hefner, and Messrs. Fritter and Geo. Schilling. The story they saw is my unpublished credential *The Alchemist*, which, having been sent to Miss Ballou, then Secretary, was shown to Miss Hefner and Mr. Fritter. Later I sent Schilling a revised copy for publication in a paper he was finally forced to abandon. The tale was written 11 years ago, yet is my latest attempt at fiction.

Sir, yr. most obt. humble servt.,

H. P. Lovecraft

12. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

My dear Kleiner:—

Feb. 2, 1916

Mrs. Renshaw is so imbued with nonsense concerning "Poetic Spontaneity", that I doubt if her work will ever appeal to many. A rather famous poetess and friend of my mother—Miss Louise Imogen Guiney of Auburndale, Mass., is afflicted with much the same delusion. *It is said* that her "verses" mean something, but I have never taken the time and trouble to find out just what! Yet Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes once predicted a bright future for her. She has written many books, and has an entreé to the best magazines, but I doubt if posterity will ever accord her a place even nearly approaching that of Dr. Holmes himself. It is through a long visit to her home in 1893 that I met Dr. Holmes, when I was only 2½ years old. He was a frequent visitor there. I was scarce old enough to be poetically influenced, yet I seem to have chosen the same model as the good Doctor—he was a devotee of Pope, and has been called "the Modern Pope". But Miss Guiney followed vaguer literary deities, of whom the Miltonic spirit *Chaos* seems to be the leader. . . .

. . . . .

I used to write detective stories very often, the works of A. Conan Doyle being my model so far as plot was concerned. But Poe was my God of Fiction. I used to love the horrible and the grotesque—much more than I do now—and can recall tales of murderers, spirits, reincarnations, metempsychoses, and every shudder-producing device known to literature!

One long-destroyed tale was of twin brothers—one murders the other, but conceals the body, and tries to *live the life of both*—appearing in one place as himself, and elsewhere as his victim. (Resemblance had been remarkable.) He meets sudden death (lightning) when posing as the dead man—is identified by a scar, and the secret finally revealed by his diary. This, I think, antedates my 11th year. . . . I still have a copy of *The Beast in the Cave*—man lost in Mammoth Cave—hears strange animal in the darkness—fatally wounds it with sharp stone—guides enter with torches, and find dying animal to be a snowy-white, ape-lie, thing—beast gives dying gasp, turns over, and *SPEAKS!!* Then expires.

It had been a *MAN*, long ago lost in the cave, and mentally and physically metamorphosed by perpetual darkness, perpetual silence, and perpetual solitude! How is that for a "dime novel"?

C. is a born prig—a real grown-up boy prodigy—but even *he* was compelled to recognize your extraordinary merit. As most of my correspondents say, he is the least human of any amateur journalist. Of kindness, pity, toleration, or consideration he knows nothing. If he praises anything, it is *absolutely on its merits*—a commendation affected by none of the natural impulses whereby a normal man must needs favour a friend or shew coldness to a foe. And taking into account the fact the *C. really possesses* the marvellous critical faculty about which he is so conceited, I think you need never again doubt the excellence of what you write. I observe that this mighty Olympian Zeus manages to introduce a covert and very nasty sneer at my own style—in the sentence where he praises you for using modern methods. Some day I shall "get" him for that slur. I caught him in an historical error a year ago—he admitted it, and I have his letter to prove it. But the admission seems to have pained him so, that he became a subtle enemy. He never acknowledged *The Conservative*, so I did not send him the last two numbers. I will take his honest criticisms—even though he tears my work to pieces—for I recognize and respect his ability—but I *will not* accept his underhanded flings without ultimate reprisal.

With best wishes, I remain, Sir,
Your most obt. humble servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

13. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Feb. 19, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

As to celebrities—one experience of mine had to do with an *astronomical* instead of a poetical giant; namely, Percival Lowell, the brother of Prees. Lowell of Harvard, and the widely known observer of Mars—whose observatory is in Flagstaff, Arizona. He lectured in this city in 1907, when I was writing for the *Tribune*, and Prof. Upton of Brown introduced me to him before the lecture in Sayles' Hall. Now here is the amusing part—I never had, have not, and never will have

the slightest belief in Lowell's speculations; and when I met him I had just been attacking his theories in my astronomical articles with my characteristically merciless language. With the egotism of my 17 years, I feared that Lowell had read what I had written! I tried to be as non-committal as possible in speaking, and fortunately discovered that the eminent observer was more disposed to ask me about my telescope, studies, etc., than to discuss Mars. Prof. Upton soon led him away to the platform, and I congratulated myself that a disaster had been averted!

With the customary Expressions of Esteem,
I beg, Sir,
to remain
Yr. most oblig'd, obt.,
humble Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

14. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

March 2, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

I used to be a water-colour fiend, and some day I may paint a picture or two for your amusement (and my own), for I still possess the painting materials that gave me so much harmless pleasure in happier days. I used to delight in marine subjects with the brush, just as with the pen I chose landscapes. Possibly this was because my first outfit had an extra plentiful supply of blue paint! My favourite type of view was a rural mead, and a promontory, with a forest in the background, the sea to one side, and a cottage or manor house in the foreground near the shore. I generally managed to find space for a lighthouse and a ship of ancient pattern.

With expressions of regard and esteem,
I am, Sir,
Yr. most oblig'd,
humble, and obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

15. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

June 4, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

The *Providence Journal* has virtually declared war on Germany, and has well-nigh exhausted Roget's *Thesaurus* in looking for adjectives wherewith to denounce th' embattled Goth; but the editor scarce dares breathe a word against the slippery sons of Saint Patrick who violate American neutrality just as flagrantly as any German ever did, and who have been consistently doing so for the past century. These migrated Micks have not scrupled to use the United States so far as they can as a weapon against their lawful King and Empire, and the "Sinn Fein", revolt is not the only one financed largely with American-gathered capital.

Mr. Moe has recently outlined a plan for a rather unique sort of rotating correspondence between four congenial United members. He proposes to have a letter constantly going around in definite order, each member of the chosen circle addressing the *three* others as he writes; and when the letter comes around to him again, taking out what he wrote before and substituting a fresh epistle. He proposed Ira A. Cole for membership, and asked me to name the fourth party. I named you, and shall, if you care to participate, start off the enterprise by sending you a letter written to you, Cole, and Moe. You will then add to this a letter addressed to Cole, Moe, and me, sending same to Cole. Cole will add a letter for Moe, myself, and you, and Moe one to me, you, and Cole; which, when I receive it, I shall deprive of my former letter, adding a fresh one to you, Cole, and Moe. Of course, when you receive it again, you will take out your old letter, adding another to Cole, Moe, and me. And so on, till death breaks the continuity of the circle, or quadrangle. Moe has named this band after its members, thus! Klei (ner) Co (le) Mo (e) Lo (vecraft)—or "The Kleicomoloes"; When I write, I shall address my letter: "Dear Kleicomo", omitting my own part of the name. You will say "Dear Comolo"; Cole, "Dear Kleimolo"; and Moe, "Dear Kleicolo"! What a nomenclature! . . .

Sir,
your most humble obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

16. THE KLEICOMOLO (KLEINER, COLE, MOE, & LOVECRAFT)

Providence, R.I.
August 8, 1916

. . . . . Our human race is only a trivial incident in the history of creation. It is of no more importance in the annals of eternity and infinity than is the child's snow-man in the annals of terrestrial tribes and nations. And more: may not all mankind be a mistake—an abnormal growth— a disease is the system of Nature—an excrescence on the body of infinite progression like a wart on the human hand? Might not the total destruction of humanity, as well as of all animate creation, be a positive *boon* to Nature as a whole? How arrogant of use, creatures of the moment, whose very species is but an experiment of the *Deus Naturae,* to arrogate to ourselves an immortal future and considerable status! . . . Our philosophy is all childishly *subjective*—we imagine that the welfare of our race is the paramount consideration, when as a matter of fact the very existence of the race may be an obstacle to the predestined course of the aggregated universes of infinity! How do we know that that form of atomic and molecular motion called "life" is the highest of all forms? Perhaps the dominant creature—the most rational and God-like of all beings—is an invisible gas! Or perhaps it is a flaming and effulgent mass of molten star-dust. Who can say that men have souls while rocks have none? . . .

. . . . .

With heartiest good wishes, I have ye Honour to remain,:
Gentlemen,: Yr. most Oblig'd and Obedient Servt.,:
LO

17. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Aug. 23, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

I have lately been amusing myself by a perusal of some of the *Imagism* nonsense of the day. As a species of pathological phenomena it is interesting. The authors are evidently of approximately harmless characteristics, since so far as I know, they are all at large; but their work indicates that most of them are dangerously near the asylum gates—uncomfortably close to the padded cell. There is absolutely no artistic principle in their effusions; ugliness replaces beauty, and chaos supplies the vacant chair of sense. Some of the stuff, though, would mean something if neatly arranged and read as prose. Of the major portion no criticism is necessary, or even possible. It is the product of hopelessly decayed taste, and arouses a feeling of sympathetic sadness, rather than of mere contempt. Since *Imagism* has no relation at all to poesy, I think no lover of the Muse need entertain apprehension for his art from this quarter. . . .

I am Sir,
Ever yr. most obt. Servt.,
H. P. Lovecraft

18. THE KLEICOMOLO (KLEINER, COLE, MOE, & LOVECRAFT)

Providence, R.I.
October, 1916

. . . . .

It was the other night my privilege to hear and see a bit of slum reform of a different sort. A speaker belonging to the Prohibition Party and clad in the vestments of ecclesiastical rank (Episcopal) had stopped his motor-car in a publick square, and was holding forth to a great assemblage of men made up of every rank and condition of society. Gentlemen waiting for street cars, and riff-raff from the corner saloons, together with every intermediate grade of humanity, were thickly represented. The speaker was a grey bearded man of fifty-one, who described his early and varied career. He had begun as a New England farmer's boy, and had soon commenced to drink in moderation; but after his early youth had become disgusted with liquor and relinquished the vice voluntarily. Later on he had served as a sailor aboard a square-rigger, and still later (as Co will learn with interest) as a cowboy all the way from Montana to Texas. His clerical duties were taken up later on. This man spoke in a voice marked equally with ease, fluency, dignity, and refinement, and expounded the workings of prohi-

bition in the various states which have adopted that it hath indeed no excuse for existence. When a sot near his car declared in uncertain tones that beer was a monstrous valuable food, the speaker quietly contrasted the bloated physique of the heckler with his own spare, wiry strength, remarking without boastfulness that no drinking man had ever excelled him either in the rigging of a brigantine or astride a cow-pony. Without the "aid" of rum he had comported himself with distinction in two of the manliest of vocations in American life. It was with admiration that I attended his words, and only the lateness of the hour induced me to leave the scene before he had completed his lay sermon.

But scarcely less interesting than the speaker were the dregs of humanity who clustered closest about him. I may say truly, that I have never before seen so many human derelicts all at once, gathered in one spot. I beheld modifications of human physiognomy which would have startled even a Hogarth, and abnormal types of gait and bodily carriage which proclaim with startling vividness man's kinship to the jungle ape. And even in the open air the stench of whiskey was appalling. To this fiendish poison, I am certain, the greater part of the equalor I saw is due. Many of these vermin were obviously not foreigners—I counted at least five American countenances in which a certain vanished decency half showed through the red whiskey bloating. Then I reflected upon the power of wine, and marvelled how self-respecting persons can imbibe such stuff, or permit it to be served upon their tables. It is the deadliest enemy with which humanity is faced. Not all the European Wars could produce a tenth of the havock occasioned among men by the wretched fluid which responsible governments allow to be sold openly. . . .

. . . . . Frankly, I cannot conceive how any thoughtful man can really be happy. There is really nothing in the universe to live for, and unless one can dismiss thought and speculation from his mind, he is liable to be engulfed by the very immensity of creation. It is vastly better that he should amuse himself with religion, or any other convenient palliative to reality which comes to hand. In my coming *Conservative* I shall have a piece called *The Symphonick Ideal,* wherein I decry the realists who would discourage the harmless little devices whereby we may trick ourselves into believing we are happy. There is much relief from the burden of life to be derived from many sources. To the man of high animal spirits, there is the mere pleasure of being alive; the *Joi de vivre,*

as our Gallick friends term it. To the credulous there is religion and its paradisal dreams. To the moralist, there is a certain satisfaction in right conduct. To the scientist there is the joy in pursuing truth which nearly counteracts the depressing revelations of truth. To the person of cultivated taste, there are the fine arts. To the man of humour, there is the sardonic delight of spying out pretensions and incongruities of life. To the poet there is the ability and privilege to fashion a little Arcadia in his fancy, wherein he may withdraw from the sordid reality of mankind at large. In short, the world abounds with simple delusions which we may call "happiness", if we be but able to entertain them. Capacity for happiness, then is mainly a personal characteristick; varying in individuals, and natural to the species until too much instruction or progress removes it. Mr. Mo slightly misinterprets me when he surmises that I deem happiness beneath the dignity of civilised man. My intention was to state, that it is merely increasingly *difficult of achievement* by civilised man. I am not so ruthless, nay, even criminal, as to wish to strip mankind of what little joy it still possesses. I have sympathy for even the silliest of pleasures, provided it be not too outrageously incompatible with reason, law and decorum. . . .

. . . . . Everything I loved had been dead for two centuries—or, as in the case of Graeco-Roman classicism, for two milenniums. I am never a part of anything around me—in everything I am an outsider. Should I find it possible to crawl backward through the Halls of Time to that age which is nearest my own fancy, I should doubtless be bawled out of the coffee-houses for heresy in religion, or else lampooned by John Dennis till I found refuge in the deep, silent Thames, that covers many another unfortunate. Yes, I seem to be a decided pessimist!—But pray do not think, gentlemen, that I am utterly forlorn and misanthropick creature. I have merely given this cheerful little outline to satisfy Mr. Mo of the correctness of his theory. Despite my solitary life, I have found infinite joy in books and writing, and am by far too much interested in the affairs of the world to quit the scene before Nature shall claim me. Though not a participant in the Business of life; I am, like the character of Addison and Steele, an impartial (or more or less impartial) Spectator, who finds not a little recreation in watching the antics of those strange and puny puppets called men. A sense of humour has helped me to endure existence; in fact, when all else fails, I never fail to extract a sarcastic smile from the contemplation of my own empty and egotistical career! . . .

. . . . I fear that all theism consists mostly of reasoning in circles, and guessing or inventing what we do not know. If God is omnipotent, then why did he pick out this one little period and world for his experiment with mankind? Or if he is local, then why did he select this locality, when he had an infinity of universes and an infinity of eras to choose from? And why should the fundamental tenets of theology hold him to be all-pervasive? These are monstrous uncomfortable questions for a pious man to answer, and yet the orthodox clergy continue to assert a complete understanding of all these things, brushing inquiry aside either by sophistry and mysticism, or by evasion and sanctified horror. Why must men of sense thus delude themselves with notions of personal and "loving" gods, spirits, and demons? All this sort of thing is good enough for the rabble, but why should rational brains be tormented with such gibberish? It is perfectly true that the conception of a personal force is a vast help in managing the millions, and in giving them much hope and happiness that truth does not convey. Viewing the question in that light, I am a friend of the church, and would never seek to disturb or diminish its influence among those who are able to swallow its doctrines. I even wish I could believe them myself—it would be so comfortable to know that some day I shall sprout wings and go up to Heaven for a talk with Alexander Pope and Sir Isaac Newton! But, provided a man cannot believe in orthodoxy, why grate on his sensibilities by demanding that he believe? We cannot do what we cannot—at least this has been the general idea since the abolishment of the Popish Inquisition. It is only the forcible propagation of conventional Christianity that makes the agnostic so bitter toward the church. He knows that all the doctrines cannot possibly be true, but he would view them with toleration if he were asked merely to let them alone for the benefit of the masses whom they can help and succour. The agnostic becomes bitter only when someone presumes to affront his reason by demanding that he believe the impossible, under penalty of censure and ostracism. The word "Christianity" becomes noble when applied to the veneration of a wonderfully good man and moral teacher, but it grows undignified when applied to a system of white magic based on the supernatural. Christ of the times might well inculcate such a notion in anyone of his qualities. Whether his mind was strictly normal or not is out of the question. Very few minds are strictly normal, and all religious fanatics are marked with abnormalities

of various sorts. It is well known that psychologists group religious phenomena with other and less divine disturbances of the brain and nervous system. Whether, as the novel of Mr. Moore implies, Christ was alive after his nominal execution; or whether the whole Resurrection legend is a myth, is immaterial. Very little reliable testimony could come from so remote a province as Judaea at that time. For the sensitive mind to harass itself over ancient and mediaeval conceptions, to strain over such questions as how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, (this was actually debated in the Middle Ages) or to wear itself to fragments trying to accept that which it can never accept, is as cruel and as reprehensible as to deprive the masses of their spiritual and orthodox solace. . . .

. . . . .

Trusting, then, to your indulgence in all matters,: I am,
Gentlemen,: Yr. most Humble and Obedient Servt.:
LO

19. TO REINHARDT KLEINER Nov. 16, 1916

My dear Kleiner:—

As to my youthful limitations, I must admit that they were very real. . . . On my maternal side I inherited a love of art. My mother is a landscape painter of no little skill, whilst my eldest aunt is still more expert in this direction, having had canvases hung in exhibitions at the Providence Art Club—yet despite *their* genius, *I* could not draw anything better than the junk you have so often beheld in my letters. I tried my best, but the gift was *absolutely wanting*. With music I made a corresponding fiasco. My rhythmic tendencies led me into a love of melody, and I was forever whistling & humming in defiance of convention & good breeding. I was so exact in time & tune, & showed such a semi-professional precision & flourish in my crude attempts, that my plea for a violin was granted when I was seven years of age, & I was placed under the instruction of the best violin teacher for children in the city—Mrs. Wilhelm Nauck. For two years I made such progress that Mrs. Nauck was enthusiastic, & declared that I should adopt music as a career—BUT, all this time the tedium of practising had been wearing

shockingly on my always sensitive nervous system. My "career" extended until 1899, its summit being a public recital at which I played a solo from Mozart before an audience of considerable size. Soon after that, my ambition & taste alike collapsed like a house of cards (to use a trite simile). I began to detest classical music, because it had meant so much painful labour to me; & I positively *loathed* the violin! Our physician, knowing my temperament, advised an immediate discontinuance of music lessons, which speedily ensued. Is this not one of the most typical failures on record? In art, I lacked *talent;* but in music, I lacked *ambition & ability*. . . . Three or four years ago I picked up my little neglected violin, tuned it after purchasing new strings, & thought I would amuse myself with its sound, even though I did no better than a rustic village fiddler. I drew my bow across the strings, when lo! I discovered that I had forgotten how to play as much as a single note! *It was as if I had never touched a violin before!!!!*

What can account for so complete an effacement of that which had been drilled into me for two laborious years? With *languages* I had failed equally. Latin is the only speech I have succeeded in mastering to an extent even mentionable. *Nervous exhaustion* always intervenes betwixt me & success, save in matters where a strong personal predilection aids the assimilation of knowledge. My love of Roman antiquities & of the power & majesty of the Eternal City is what helped me with Latin. But concerning my linguistic failures, the case is not so bad as that with music. I *do not forget* what I learn in the domain of letters. Mathematics is a melancholy word in my vocabulary. Having resolved at the age of twelve to become an astronomer, I of course deemed it needful to perfect myself in algebra, geometry, trigonometry & calculus; but discovered in high-school that my old hatred of *arithmetic* extended even into the loftier regions of mathematical research. The first year I barely passed in algebra, but was so little satisfied with what I had accomplished, that I voluntarily repeated the last half of the term. After three years I thought I had learnt something of algebra & geometry, but after my general nervous breakdown of 1908-1909 I must have allowed my knowledge to slip away, for when I tried to act as a tutor to my cousin last year, I found that I had no better command of the subjects than he! What a dunce I must be! Between 1909 & 1912 I tried to perfect myself as a chemist, conquering inorganic chemistry & qualitative analysis with ease, since they had been favourite pastimes of my

youth. But in the midst of *organic* chemistry, with its frightfully dull theoretical problems, & involved cases of isomerism of hydrocarbon radicals—the benzene ring—&c., &c., &c.— — — — — I found myself so wretched bored that I positively could not study for more than fifteen minutes without acquiring an excruciating headache which prostrated me completely for the rest of the day. I became rather thoroughly convinced that I was cursed with that most agonizing combination of conflicting elements—an insatiable desire for knowledge & achievement, coupled with an intellect & constitution incapable of material progress toward the goal. What a mixture—the aspirations of a poet & philosopher beset by the mental limitations of a butcher or a bricklayer! . . .

I was born on the 20th of August, 1890, at No. 454 (then numbered 194) Angell Street, in the city of Providence. This was the home of my mother's family; my parents' actual residence at the time being in Dorchester, Mass. My father was the son of an Englishman who came from Devonshire to the state of New York in 1847 on account of a loss of fortune. This British grandfather I never saw in person, though he is well known to me through daguerreotypes & photographs. . . . My father, his youngest child & only son, was naturally something of an Englishman himself, though born in Rochester, N.Y. . . . My father's mother was an Allgood of Northumberland, living in N. Y., descended from a British officer who remained in America after the disastrous Revolution.

On my mother's side, I am a complete New-England Yankee, coming from Phillipses, Places, & Rathbones. . . .

In the mid-seventies, my grandfather transferred all his interests to Providence (where his offices had always been) & erected one of the handsomest residences in the city—to me, *the* handsomest—my own beloved birthplace! The spacious house, raised on a high green terrace, looks down upon grounds which are almost a park, with winding walks, arbours, trees, & a delightful fountain. Back of the stable is the orchard, whose fruits have delighted so many of my sad (?) childish hours. The place is sold now, & many of the things I have described in the present tense, ought to be described in the *past* tense. . . .

When I was two years old—or rather, a year & a half old—my parents moved to Auburndale, Mass., sharing a house with the family of the well known poetess, Miss Louise Imogen Guiney, whose verses you

have probably seen, & who has been considered one of the foremost poets of the Massachusetts circle. Miss Guiney had been educated in Providence, where she met my mother years before.

At the home of Miss Guiney I probably saw more celebrated persons than I have ever seen since; for her poetical standing is very high. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was a not infrequent caller. And now comes the personal element, for it is there, in Auburndale, amidst the most poetic of poetic auspices, that consciousness first came to my infant mind. I distinctly recall the quiet, shady suburb as I saw it in 1892—& it is a rather curious psychological fact that at this early age I was impressed most of all with the railway bridge & the four-tracked Boston & Albany road which extended beneath it. The trains fascinated me, & to this day I have a love of everything pertaining to railways. (Except the Adamson Law!!) Miss Guiney kept a most extraordinary collection of St. Bernard dogs, all named after authors & poets. A shaggy gentleman by the classic name of Brontë was my particular favourite & companion, being ever in attendance on my chariot as my mother wheeled that vehicle through the streets & avenues. Brontë would permit me to place my fist in his mouth without biting me, & would snarl protectingly if any stranger approached me.

As an infant, I had been restless & prone to cry; now, when able to talk & walk, my temperamental excitability veered in the opposite direction, & I was nicknamed *Little Sunshine* by Mrs. Guiney, mother of the poetess. (Imagine the solid old Conservative being called *Little Sunshine!!!!*—Shades of Schopenhauer!!!!!) Mrs. Guiney was a delightfully cultured lady, the widow of a General of Mass. Volunteers, who had carried a bullet in his skull for ten years after the Civil War, when death finally released him from pain. In appearance, I was vastly different then. My hair was yellow, & allowed to curl over my shoulders in ringlets much like those of the periwigs I am so fond of drawing. This golden mane was another cause of the nickname.

About this time I began to display a precocity which ought to have warned my parents of that mediocre older life which too often follows such an infancy. At the age of two I was a rapid talker, familiar with the alphabet from my blocks & picture-books, & (which will interest you) absolutely *metre-mad!* I could not read, but would repeat any poem of simple sort with unfaltering cadence. Mother Goose was my principal classic, & Miss Guiney would continually make me repeat

parts of it; not that my rendition was necessarily notable, but because my age lent uniqueness to the performance. . . .

. . . . In April, 1893, my father was stricken with a complete paralysis resulting from a brain overtaxed with study & business cares. He lived for five years at a hospital, but was never again able to move hand or foot, or to utter a sound. This tragedy dissolved all plans for permanent settlement in Auburndale, & caused the sale of the property recently acquired there. Permanently stricken with grief, my mother took me to the Phillips household, thereby causing me to grow up as a complete Rhode-Islander. At the age of three, my memories crystallize definitely & connectedly for the first time. Both of my maternal grandparents were then living, & my beloved grandfather, Whipple Van Buren Phillips, became the centre of my entire universe. A man of culture & extensive travel, he had accumulated a fund of cosmopolitan lore which never ceased to delight me. His acquaintance with all the wonders of Europe, which he had seen at first hand, made me feel almost as if I had seen them myself. It was from him that I acquired my love of Rome. He had loved to muse amidst the ruins of the ancient city, & had brought from Italy a wealth of mosaics, (not the kind that Moe calls my verse!) paintings, & other objects d'art whose theme was more often classically Roman than Italian. He always wore a pair of mosaics in his cuffs for buttons—one a view of the Coliseum (so *tiny* yet so *faithful*); the other of the Forum. I wear them now—for I still adhere to the old-style round cuff that most have discarded in favour of the modern "link". My grandmother was a serene, quiet lady of the old school, & she did her best to correct my increasingly boorish deportment—for my nervousness made me a very restless & uncontrollable child. She was a devoted student of astronomy, & though she did not personally direct my gaze to the heavens, it was through her library of astronomical books that I first became interested in that direction. My two aunts presented rather a contrast. The elder was (and still is) a devotee of science & literature. She was a potent influence, I think, in turning my fancy toward the classics, while my old love of chemistry also arises from her remarks on that science. She was (though she has ceased to paint now) an artist of great power. When she married Dr. Clark, she proved the means of introducing to me the most substantial classic element of all! My other aunt was yet a very young lady when I first began to observe events about me. She was rather a favourite in

the younger social set, & brought the principal touch of gayety to a rather conservative household. To the sprightly conversation & repartee of this younger generation, I owe my first lessons in the school of Pope. I could sense the artificiality of the atmosphere, & often strove to ape the airs & affectations of those whom I observed & studied. I extracted not a little celebrity & egotism from my mimicry of various types of callers; particularly of one Edward F. Gamwell, who next to my grandfather was my ideal male. I was infinitely delighted when this individual (then a Brown student) decided upon a lasting affiliation with the family. The engagement of my aunt & Mr. Gamwell, & the customary levity of the younger set in their good-natured raillery of the two, imparted to me a curiously worldly cynicism regarding sentimental matters, & forever turned my Muse from the field which you so gracefully adorn.

In 1894 I was able to read fluently, & was a tireless student of the dictionary; never allowing a word to slip by me without ascertaining its meaning. It was then that the mellowed tomes of the family library became my complete world—at once my servants & my masters. I flitted hither & thither amongst them like a fascinated moth, taking supreme joy in the old English volumes of the Lovecrafts, sent to my mother for me when my father was paralyzed, since I had become the only male representative of this family. I read everything, understood a little, & imagined more. *Grimm's Fairy Tales* were my truly representative diet, & I lived mostly in a mediaeval world of imagination. And now began my Britannic predilection, which had already been indicated in vague ways. I always had the impression of being English, & when my grandfather told me of the American Revolution, I shocked everyone by adopting a dissenting view. . . . At length, in the interests of amity, we ceased to discuss the matter. But I had permanently come to feel myself an *outsider*. Grover Cleveland was grandpa's ruler, but Her Majesty, Victoria, Queen of Great Britain & Ireland & Empress of India commanded my allegiance. "God Save the Queen!" was a stock phrase of mine.

In January, 1896, the death of my grandmother plunged the household into a gloom from which it never fully recovered. The black attire of my mother & aunts terrified & repelled me to such an extent that I would surreptitiously pin bits of bright cloth or paper to their skirts for sheer relief. They had to make a careful survey of their attire before

receiving callers or going out! And then it was that my former high spirits received their damper. I began to have nightmares of the most hideous description, peopled with *things* which I called "night-gaunts" —a compound word of my own coinage. I used to draw them after waking (perhaps the idea of these figures came from an edition de luxe of *Paradise Lost* with illustrations by Doré, which I discovered one day in the east parlour). In dreams they were wont to whirl me through space at a sickening rate of speed, the while fretting & impelling me with their detestable tridents. It is fully fifteen years—aye, more—since I have seen a "night-gaunt", but even now, when half asleep & drifting vaguely along over a sea of childhood thoughts, I feel a thrill of fear—something like that in Mrs. Jordan's poem *The Pool* —& instinctively *struggle to keep awake*. That was my one prayer back in '96—each night—to *keep awake* & ward off the night-gaunts!

You will notice that I have made no reference to childish friends & playmates—I had none! The children I knew disliked me, & I disliked them. I was used to adult company & conversation, & despite the fact that I felt shamefully dull beside my elders, I had nothing in common with the infant train. Their romping & shouting puzzled me. I hated mere play & dancing about—in my relaxations I always desired *plot*. My mother once tried to place me in a children's dancing class, but I abhorred the thought. My reply to her suggestion sheds a light on the nature of my bookish browsings in about the year '98. I said: *"Nemo fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insanit!"* Which is from Cicero's oration against Catiline. It was in the sombre period of 1896 that I first became a temperance enthusiast. Somewhere I discovered an old copy of John B. Gough's *Sunshine & Shadow* & read & re-read it, backward & forward. From that time to this, I have never been at a loss for something to say against liquor! My reading now centred upon classical mythology, to which I had progressed from Grimm. I admired & emulated the poetical quotations so liberally interspersed through the pages of Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, & in 1897 produced my first formal poem, entitled *The New Odyssey; or, The Adventures of Ulysses*. . . . All this time my spirits were dampened by a vague sensation of impending calamity. I was not blind to a waning of the family fortune, as evidenced by a decrease in the number of servants & the closing of the stables. . . . Religious matters likewise fretted me. *I never had the slightest shadow of belief in the supernatural*, but pretended to believe,

because it was deemed the proper thing in a Baptist household. Sunday school so much depressed me, that I was soon relieved of that care. . . .

It was in the winter of 1896 that I first became acquainted with the theatre, which has furnished my life with the only real relaxation it has ever had. The family were still in mourning for my grandmother, but we were acquainted with Mr. Manow, lessee & manager of Providence's chief theatre—The Providence Opera House—(he lived directly across the street) so that it was not thought too shocking to let my aunt take me to see something besides gloom. The play—the first I ever beheld—was one of Denman Thompson's minor efforts—*The Sunshine of Paradise Alley*—& had a slum setting which rather enraptured me, since I had never beheld real slums. My memory of that play is yet more vivid than of any of last season's offerings! Act I—The Slum home of Nellie O'Grady, nicknamed *The Sunshine of Paradise Alley*. Act II—The Brooklyn Bridge by night—the lights of New York—the "wharf rats"—blear-eyed vagabonds lurking beneath the abutments of the bridge—the stage moon—rising upon a scene of mingled squalor & splendour—. Act III—A wretched courtyard in the tenement districts—a real hand organ & monkey—the underworld at a glance. Act IV—A political picnic in Harlem—the oddly loud apparel of the "ladies" & "gents"—the quaint Bowery dialect—the fascinating *scenery!* All this I recall as yesterday, though I have not even seen a programme of it for *twenty years*. . . .

It was in 1898 that I first attempted to attend school. Hitherto it had been deemed unwise to subject so irritable & sensitive a child to discipline of any sort. I entered the highest grade of primary school, but soon found the instruction quite useless, since I had picked up most of the material before. However, I do not regret the venture, since it was in dear old Slater Avenue (alas—to be abandoned next year!) that I made my only childhood friendship—that with Chester & Harold Munroe, the former of whom is in the United. . . .

I had also dabbled much in fiction delighting mainly in the most exciting & horrible things a child's fancy can conceive of. I enclose an actual manuscript of this period—a short story written at the age of 8, whose conclusion contains a violent death—as did most of my stories. I wonder if you can decipher my childish handwriting? I will also enclose a less dismal tale than *The Secret Cave*—a juvenile attempt at humour entitled *The Little Glass Bottle*. . . .

My taste in the drama was vastly improved in 1887, when I saw for the first time a Shakespearian play! This offering was *Cymbeline*, with Margaret Mather, a favourite artiste of a generation ago, as Imogen. It came to the Opera House during Christmas week, & I witnessed the Christmas (Saturday) matinee. It is needless to remark that I was absolutely enraptured with the glamour of the production, & the beauty of the blank verse, which I had never previously heard on the stage. My little toy theatre at home became resplendent with Shakespearian scenery—hand painted by the proprietor—& for weeks afterward I played nothing but *Cymbeline*. I still have the set of pasteboard performers, in faithful costume, which I drew & cut out for this miniature production. . . .

In 1899 a new interest began to gain ascendancy. My predilection for natural science, fostered by my Aunt Lillian, took form in a love of chemistry. A friend of ours is Prof. John Howard Appleton, the venerable professor of chemistry at Brown, & author of many books on the subject. He presented me with his own book for beginners—*The Young Chemist*, & before many months had elapsed, I was deep in experimental research, having a well equipped laboratory in the cellar, which my grandfather had fitted up for me. In March, 1899, I began to publish a chemical daily paper called *The Scientific Gazette*, of which I made four carbon copies for "circulation". How I managed to keep this thing in existence for seven years, as I did, is still a mystery to me. However, it soon degenerated into a weekly!

About 1900 I became a passionate devotee of geography & history, & an intense fanatic on the subject of Antarctic exploration. The Borchgrevink expedition, which had just made a new record in South Polar achievement, greatly stimulated this study. I wrote many fanciful tales about the Antarctic Continent, besides composing "learned" treatises on the real facts. . . .

In 1902 I again attempted school; & singularly enough, I went to the same old Slater Avenue edifice, which had now acquired a grammar department in addition to the primary grades. Here again was I brought into contact with other children, but my attitude toward them was now different. I had read enough idyllic verse to understand that childhood is a golden age in the life of man; never to be regained when once lost; so I tried to interest myself in the affairs of other boys with some degree of success. I joined the "Slater Avenue Army",

whose wars were waged in the neighbouring woods, & though my dramatic suggestions were not always accepted with perfect tolerance, I managed to get along with my "fellow-soldiers" fairly well. . . . At school I was considered a bad boy, for I would never submit to discipline. When censured by my teacher for disregard of rules, I used to point out to her the essential emptiness of conventionality, in such a satirical way, that her patience must have been quite severely strained; but withal she was remarkably kind, considering my intractable disposition. . . .

. . . In the summer of 1903 my mother presented me with a 2½" astronomical telescope, and thenceforward my gaze was ever upward at night. The late Prof. Upton of Brown, a friend of the family, gave me the freedom of the college observatory, (Ladd Observatory) & I came & went there at will on my bicycle. Ladd Observatory tops a considerable eminence about a mile from the house. I used to walk up Doyle Avenue hill with my wheel, but when returning would have a glorious coast down it. So constant were my observations, that my neck became affected by the strain of peering at a difficult angle. It gave me much pain, & resulted in a permanent curvature perceptible today to a close observer. My body has ever been unequal to the demands of an active career.

It was about this time that Dr. Franklin Chase Clark, a distant relative who had become a closer kin through marriage to my aunt, began to influence my intellectual development. He was a man of vast learning—a graduate of Brown, Harvard Medical School, & Columbia College, bearing the degree of A. M. besides his ordinary A. B. & professional M. D. He was an author of medical treatises, & an authority on medical ethics; but besides all this there was another separate side to his life—the classical side. He translated Homer, Virgil, Lucretius, & Statius into excellent English verse, & composed reams of original matter. *Purely by coincidence,* he was an old-fashioned poet of my own beloved school, & he did much to correct & purify my faulty style. He likewise worked wonders with my prose. I regarded, & still regard, his level as unattainable by myself; but I was so desirous of his approbation, that I would labour hours with my work to win a word of praise from his lips. I hung upon his conversation as Boswell hung upon Dr. Johnson's; yet was ever oppressed by a sense of hopeless inferiority. His historical attainments were likewise immense. After his death last

year, the R. I. Historical Society took over his unpublished manuscripts.

My other uncle-in-law, Mr. Gamwell, was a Cambridge man, hence my converse with him was less frequent; but I made the most of every opportunity. He had taught me to rattle off the Greek alphabet when I was six years old; a feat which made Greek much easier for me in high school. In 1903 he was owner & editor of the Cambridge *Tribune,* & stimulated my editorial tendencies to such an extent that I founded the *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy,* to replace the almost defunct *Scientific Gazette.* (I conducted both simultaneously in 1903-04.) . . .

In 1903-04 I had private tutors, but in the autumn of 1904 I mingled with the world once more—to the extent of entering Hope St. High School. Here I was confronted for the first time with cosmopolitanism. Slater Avenue School is public, but it is rather a neighbourhood affair, with most of its pupils drawn from the old families. But Hope Street is near enough to the "North End" to have a considerable *Jewish* attendance. . . . . Knowing of my ungovernable temperament, & of my lawless conduct at Slater Avenue, most of my friends (if friends they may be called) predicted disaster for me, when my will should conflict with the authority of Hope Street's masculine teachers. But a disappointment of the happiest sort occurred. The Hope Street preceptors quickly *understood* my disposition as "Abbie" had never understood it; & by *removing all restraint,* made me apparently their comrade & equal; so that I ceased to think of discipline, but merely comported myself as a gentleman among gentlemen. I had nothing but the pleasantest of relations with the Hope Street faculty during my four years' stay there. Declining health greatly interfered with my course at High School, but I managed to attend intermittently from 1904 to 1908. . . . My English teacher was an old lady named Mrs. Blake, who had a pleasant though slightly cynical disposition. She annoyed me with a certain doubt of the *originality* of my compositions. One day she called me to her desk & asked me if a certain essay of mine, on the planet Mars (or the moon—I forget which!), were not copied from a magazine article; to which I replied, that I had taken it *verbatim* from a rural paper! Upon her waxing wroth, I produced the clipping—with the prominently printed heading "By H. P. Lovecraft"!!! After that, Mrs. Blake was somewhat less sceptical of my original literary powers.

Mention of my early printed articles leads me to speak of my first

experiences with the press. A "letter to the editor" in the *Prov. Sunday Journal* of June 3, was my debut before the public. In August, 1906, I began my series of regular monthly astronomical articles in the newly founded *Providence Tribune*, a series which was later transferred to the *News*, which allows me all the space I desire. During 1906, 1907, & 1908 I flooded the *Pawtuxet Valley Gleaner* with my prose articles. This rural paper was the oracle of that section of the country from which my mother's family had originally come, & was taken for old times' sake in our household. The name "Phillips" is a magic word in Western Rhode Island, & the *Gleaner* was more than willing to print & feature anything from Whipple V. Phillips' grandson. Only the failure of the *Gleaner* put an end to my activity in its columns.

But my progress had received its severest blow in the spring of 1904. On March 28th of that year my beloved grandfather passed away as the result of an apoplectic stroke, & I was deprived of my closest companion. I was never afterward the same. His death brought financial disaster besides its more serious grief. As President of the Owyhee Land & Irrigation Co., an Idaho corporation with Providence offices, he had struggled hard to achieve vast success in the reclamation of Western land. He had weathered many calamities such as the bursting of his immense dam on Snake River; but now that he was gone, the company was without its brains. He has been a more vital & important figure than even he himself had realized; & with his passing, the rest of the board lost their initiative & courage. The corporation was unwisely dissolved at a time when my grandfather would have *persevered*—with the result that others reaped the wealth which should have gone to its stockholders. My mother & I were forced to vacate the beautiful estate at 454 Angell Street, & to enter the less spacious abode at 598, three squares eastward. The combined loss of grandfather & birthplace made me the most miserable of mortals. My grandfather was a cheerful man, whose conversation always brightened me; but it was to be heard no more. My home had been my ideal of Paradise & my source of inspiration—but it was to be profaned & altered by other hands. Life from that day has held for me but one ambition—to regain the old place & reëstablish its glory—a thing I fear I can never accomplish. For twelve years I have felt like an exile.

In 1908 I was about to enter Brown University, when my health completely gave way—causing the necessary abandonment of my college career. Of my non-university education, I never cease to be ashamed; but I know, at least, that I could not have done differently. I busied myself at home with chemistry, literature, & the like; composing some of the weirdest & darkest fiction ever written by man! I was a close disciple of Poe, & a diligent delver into the regions of the "grotesque & arabesque" to quote his own phrase. It was in this period that I wrote *The Alchemist*, my U.A.P.A. credential, which will appear in *The United Amateur* for December. I shunned all human society, deeming myself too much of a failure in life to be seen socially by those who had known me in youth, & had foolishly expected such great things of me. From then to now, I have been practically unknown save to a very few old acquaintances. I am a complete disappointment, having accomplished absolutely nothing during my 26 futile years of existence. In 1912 my first bit of published *verse* appeared in *The Evening Bulletin*. It is a 62-line satire in the usual heroic couplet, ridiculing a popular movement on the part of the Italians of the Federal Hill slums to change the name of their main street from "Atwells' Avenue" to "Columbus Avenue". I pictured Providence in 2000 A. B., with *all* the English names changed to foreign appellations. This piece received considerable notice of a minor sort, I am told, though I doubt if it had much effect in silencing the Italians' clamour. The idea was so foolish that it probably died of its own weakness.

In 1913 I had formed the reprehensible habit of picking up cheap magazines like *The Argosy* to divert my mind from the tedium of reality. One of the authors in that periodical so much excited my contempt, that I wrote a letter to the editor in quaint Queen-Anne prose, satirising the offending novelist. This letter, which was printed in the September number, aroused a veritable tempest of anger amongst the usual readers of the magazine. I was assailed & reviled by innumerable letters, which appeared in the editorial department. Among these hostile compositions was a piece of tetrameter verse by one John Russell, of Tampa, Fla., which had in it so much native wit, that I resolved to answer it. Accordingly I sent *The Argosy* a 44-line satire in the manner of Pope's *Dunciad*. This was duly printed in January, 1914, & it created an immense sensation (of hostile character) amongst the *Argosy* readers. The editorial department had nothing but anti-Lovecraft letters

the following month! And then I composed *another* satire, flaying all my tormentors in stinging pentameter. This, too, was printed, till the storm of fury waxed high. Russell's replies were all rather clever, & well worth answering. Finally I sent Russell a personal communication which led to an ultimate peace—a peace established just in time, for T. N. Metcalf, the editor of *The Argosy* had intimated that the poet's war must soon end, since correspondents were complaining of the preeminence of our verses in their beloved magazine. They feared we were usurping all the extra space! So Russell & I officially closed the affair with a composite poem—my part of which was in heroics; his in anapaest. This farewell to *The Argosy* took place in October, 1914, & I have never since beheld that worthy organ of popular literature. . . . Amateur journalism has many eyes, & long before this momentous conflict passed into history it was being watched by no less a celebrity than Hon. Edward F. Daas of Milwaukee, Wis. This gentleman, then official editor, communicated with Russell & with me in March, 1914, which resulted in my advent to the *United* on April 6. . . .

With sincerest best wishes,
I am, Sir,
Yr most Oblig'd & Obt Servt
HLovecraft

20. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Jan. 31, 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

. . . . . Last week a local emporium of amusement known as Fay's Theatre offered a cash prize of $25.00 for the best essay or review concerning a "feature picture" displayed by them—a widely advertised picture entitled *The Image-Maker of Thebes* (Thanhouse—Pathé release.) Having something of a critical nature, I resolved to witness the great five-reel film spectacle, & to participate in the competition. The picture was even poorer than I expected—a rough-hewn amateurish affair dealing with reincarnation in a pitifully feeble & hackneyed manner, containing not the slightest subtlety or technical skill in plot, directing, or acting. It was a hopeless relic of the time-honoured "10-20-30" melodrama. I gave up all hope of winning the prize, since I thought nothing but a favourable critique would be acceptable; but in a spirit of semi-humour I sent the management a *genuine* criticism covering four typewritten pages—an essay in my customary U.A.P.A. manner—which would, in colloquial parlance, be designated as a "roast"! Imagine, then, my surprise at receiving yesterday a cheque for $25.00 as winner of the prize—a cheque accompanied by a letter of exceedingly flattering nature!! Which goes to show that the best method of eliciting praise from a motion-picture exhibitor is to ridicule, satirise, & condemn the pictures he displays!!

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Ah, me! how strange & how much past finding out is the elusive spirit of Youth. The gamin of the streets is old & hard ere he turns ten—he has lived through all the possibilities of his sort of life before he is fifteen, & he is weazened & aged at twenty. And yet—how swiftly slip the unnoticed years over the head of the recluse! But yesterday we were children of seven, scrawling our first idle rhymes. Before we have time to lift the pencil we are grown to manhood; yet scrawling as before, & wondering why the world calls us grown, when but a moment before it called us children. Then, after a few more paragraphs are written, they tell us we are no longer young men! But what is this middle life we are entering? We feel the same—see the same sun & stars, feel the same breezes, & enjoy the same verdant vistas. We even see the same children—like ourselves—& yet! After all, they are *not the same* children! They are the children of those who were children with us—& we are children still, though exiled from our kind by the absurd notion of the world that we are growing old! And pray, why should we grow old? What is the reward of age, if it be not death? Verily, such things baffle the understanding! It is better not to seek the underlying truths of life. Let us glide o'er the surface on a summer wind, & sink to our last sleep before we shall ever have awakened to the repellent realities of sordid existence.

I am most Sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

21. THE KLEICOMOLO (TO KLEINER, COLE, MOE, & LOVECRAFT)

Providence, R.I.
April, 1917

. . . . . The progress of science will eventually, I believe, enunciate at least two laws which will forever put an end to spiritualism amongst the educated and even the half-educated. They are:

(1) Life, animal and vegetable, including human life, is a mode of motion which ceases absolutely upon the death of the body containing it.

(2) The future, so far as organic beings are concerned, can never by predicted, since individual and unfathomable caprice has power to direct events into any of the innumerable channels possible under the natural law.

. . . I once owned an Edison machine of the primitive type, with recorder and blanks; and I made many vocal records in imitation of the renowned vocalists of the wax cylinder. My colleagues would smile to hear some of the plaintive tenor solos which I perpetrated in the days of my youth!! But sad to say, I gave the old machine away about a year ago to a deserving and not too musical youth who occasionally performs useful labour about the place. I wish now that I had retained it! . . .

. . . . . A mere knowledge of the approximate dimensions of the visible universe is enough to destroy forever the notion of a personal godhead whose whole care is expended upon puny mankind, and whose only genuine and original Messiah was dispatched to save the insignificant vermin, or men, who inhabit this one relatively microscopic globe. Not that science positively refutes religion—it merely makes religion seem monstrously improbable that a large majority of men can no longer believe in it. And to go a step further—sooner or later the relation betwixt organic and inorganic life will be discovered. It will be clearly demonstrated how carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and other elements combine to form substances possessing vital energy. Probably the chemist or biologist will be able to create in his laboratory some very primitive sort of animal or vegetable organism. This will be the death knell of superstition and theology alike; and unless it be sacredly concealed, the church will cease to exist save amongst the very ignorant. But of course, since this has not yet come to pass, I am aware that it forms no truly legitimate part of my case against orthodoxy. However—the probability is strong!

. . . . . All my argument does not need to show why truth interests me—all my argument cannot show why, for I do not know! The fact remains that it *does* interest me, as it has interested thousands of other men. The pages of history are red with the blood of those who have died for their intellectual convictions. Truth-hunger is a hunger just as real as food-hunger—it is equally strong if less explicable; indeed, who can assign a direct reason for any of the obscurer desires and aspirations of man? It is all according to the plan of Nature. In flouting the absolute truth because of its lack of application to the affairs of mankind, Mr. Mo reminds me of the Florentine astronomer Sizzi, who thus argued against the existence of Jupiter's satellites: "Moreover", quoth this sage in the course of his argument, "the satellites are invisible to the naked eye, and therefore can exert no influence on the earth, and therefore would be useless, *and therefore do not exist!*" 'Twas vastly inconsiderate of Galileo to see these troublesome orbs, after they had been conclusively demonstrated not to exist at all! How complex is the mortal brain!

Conscious, therefore, of your manifold indulgences, I am,
Gentlemen,: Yr. most oblig'd & obt. Servt.: Lo.

22. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Providence, R.I.
May 23, 1917

(From *The Kleilo*—Vol. XYZ No. ZYX)

Some time ago, impressed by my entire uselessness in the world, I resolved to attempt enlistment despite my almost invalid condition. I argued that if I chose a regiment soon to depart for France; my sheer nervous force, which is not inconsiderable, might sustain me till a bullet or piece of shrapnel could more conclusively & effectively dispose of me. Accordingly I presented myself at the recruiting station of the R. I. National Guard & applied for entry into whichever unit should first

proceed to the front. On account of my lack of technical or special training, I was told that I could not enter the Field Artillery, which leaves first; but was given a blank of application for the Coast Artillery, which will go after a short preliminary period of defence service at one of the forts of Narragansett Bay. The questions asked me were childishly inadequate, & so far as physical requirements are concerned, would have admitted a chronic invalid. The only diseases brought into discussion were specific ailments from which I had never suffered, & of some of which I had scarcely ever heard. The medical examination related only to major organic troubles, of which I have none, & I soon found myself (as I thought) a duly enrolled private in the 9th Co. R.I.N.G.! As you may have deduced, I embarked upon this desperate venture without informing my mother; & as you may also have deduced, the sensation created at home was far from slight. In fact, my mother was almost prostrated with the news, since she knew that only by rare chance could a weakling like myself survive the rigorous routine of camp life. Her activities soon brought my military career to a close for the present. It required but a few words from our family physician regarding my nervous condition to annul the enlistment, though the army surgeon declared that such an annulment was highly unusual & almost against the regulations of the service. The fact is, I had really gotten the best of that astute medicus; for without making a single positive misstatement I had effectively concealed the many & varied weaknesses which have virtually blasted my career. Fortune had sided with me in causing no attack of blurred eyesight to come upon me during the physical examination. But my final status is that of a man "Rejected for physical disability." On the appointed day I shall register for conscription, but I presume my services will not be desired. My mother has threatened to go to any lengths, legal or otherwise, if I do not reveal all the ills which unfit me for the army. If I had realised to the full how much she would suffer through my enlistment, I should have been less eager to attempt it; but being of no use to myself it was hard for me to believe I am of use to anyone else. Still, I might have known that mothers are always solicitous for their offspring, no matter how worthless said offspring may happen to be! And so I am still in civil life, scribbling as of old, & looking with envious eye upon the Khaki-clad men who are now so frequently seen upon the streets of the business section & in the cars everywhere. I envy your half-brother his position as a soldier of the N.Y.N.G. During the past week I have been

quite prostrated with a cold & with frequent spells of bad vision. Had my enlistment matured successfully, I wonder how I should have kept up! And yet—I will wager that I *would* have kept up some way or other. Now that death is about to become the fashion, I wish that I might meet it in the most approved way, "Somewhere in France". The army doctor pronounced me so sound organically, that I fear I have many weary years to drag out, unless the draft comes to my relief by taking me in spite of medical & maternal protests; *I* shall not protest on mine own account! . . .

I remain as ever
Yr. most oblig'd, humble, & obedient Serv[t]
HPLovecraft

23. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell St.
Providence, R.I.
May 30, 1917

My dear Mo:—

Realising the utter inconsequentiality of one man more or less in this insignificant world, I lately endeavoured to justify my hitherto useless existence by ending it in the army. Specifically, I attempted despite my frail and nervous physique to enlist in the R. I. National Guard; trusting to the sheer force of psychological stimulus to keep me alive and on my feet until a Hunnish missile might gracefully dispose of me. Since I have no actual *disease* or abnormal organs, I nearly passed the physical tests by judicious restraint in answering questions; but my mother and family physician were finally able to frustrate my belligerent ambitions and bring about my rejection for physical disability. I presume they will do the same thing when the draft occurs; though for mine own part I think I could do much worse than quietly extinguish (if not distinguish) myself in a more or less effulgent blaze of mortal glory! I am told that a week of camp life and its hardships would probably wreck my constitution forever; but who can tell until it is attempted? And besides, what is the life or health of one weakling, when thousands of sturdy and useful young men are to be killed, crip-

pled, and disfigured in a few months? Verily, 'tis amusing to make so great a stir about a little matter like this, when in the interminable recesses of ethereal space all mankind is but a superfluous atom! My despised theories of ultimate and absolute truth are (or ought to be) quite comforting in this hour of stress and trial!

With best wishes,
Sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft.

24. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

June 22, 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

I am feeling desolate and lonely indeed as a civilian. Practically all my personal acquaintances are now in some branch of the service, mostly Plattsburg or R.I.N.G. Yesterday one of my closest friends entered the Medical (not as a doctor, but as an assistant—carrying stretchers, driving ambulances, etc. etc.) Corps of the regular army. The physical tests for this corps are very light, and in spite of my previous rejection for Coast Artillery I would try to enter, were it not for the almost frantic attitude of my mother; who makes me promise every time I leave the house that I will not make another attempt at enlistment! But it is disheartening to be the one non-combatant among a profusion of proud recruits. . . .

. . . . .

I was properly shocked at your account of amateur Bohemianism in New-York, as exemplified by your recent *spree* wherein you failed to reach home till morning. I should be more shocked if I were not writing these words at the unholy hour of 3 a. m., to tell the truth, I am the most nocturnal of mortals—though there is doubtless a distinction betwixt being *out* late, and merely being *up* late. I love to pore over ancient volumes or scribble letters and bad verse when all the world is wrapp'd in silence and gloom. In spirit I am lingering at Will's Coffee-House with those congenial companions who died a century and a half ago.

I am, Sir, yr. most oblig'd and Obedient Servt.
H. P. Lovecraft

25. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

The Deanery
St. Angell's
27th Aug., 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

. . . . . The Guard examination was somewhat less clumsy than that which you underwent. It was conducted in an office whose privacy was absolute, & whose floor & temperature were both suitable. The physician who conducted this examination, Maj. Augustus W. Calder, has just been rejected himself by the Federal surgeons as physically unfit. He is receiving the same treatment he finally gave me! If my mother had not interfered, I should certainly have slipped by, & would now be with my company (9th Coast Artillery) at Fort Standish, in Boston Harbour. It would have been an interesting experience, & would have either killed or cured me by this time.

I am Sir, Ever yr. most
Oblig'd, humble, & ob^{t} Serv^{t}
Lewis Theobald, Jun.

26. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Sept. 24, 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

. . . . . Just a week ago I enjoyed the honour of a personal call from Mr. W. Paul Cook, amateur of eminence & editor of *The Vagrant*. I was rather surprised at his appearance, for he is rather more rustic & carelessly groomed than I had expected a man of his celebrity to be. In fact, his antique derby hat, unpressed garments, frayed cravat, yellowish collar, ill-brushed hair, & none too immaculate hands made me think of my old friend Sam Johnson; another great literary man who was somewhat negligent as to personal appearance & the like. But Cook's conversation makes up for whatever outward deficiencies he may possess. Though not overwhelmingly bookish, he has a keen mind, dry

humour, & an infinite & quite encyclopaedic knowledge of the events & personages of amateur journalism past & present. I cannot see how one head can hold such a mass of amateur history & anecdote. He is opinionated to a considerable degree, & has scant love for any existing amateur press association; but his love of the general cause is so great, that he is ever willing to oblige any amateur irrespective of associational affiliations. He is to print the September *United Amateur*, though he will not accept a regular appointment as official Publisher. His coming *Vagrant* promises to be an ample & notable issue, having, I believe 56 pages. I think I shall have Cook print *The Conservative* in future, for he underbids all competitors. His low rates are a philanthropic favour to amateurdom, & are based upon a complete sacrifice of personal profit. He is so anxious to establish a revival of amateur journalism, that he is doing the work absolutely at cost. His rates are as follows:

300 copies 5 × 7 —per page—$0.85
300 copies 6 × 9 —per page— 1.05
300 copies 7 × 10—per page— 1.25

I remain
As ever yr. humble Servant
L Theobald, Jun.

27. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Oct. 14, 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

. . . . . To me a good motion picture is vastly more acceptable than a poor or poorly acted drama, & I am a regular patron of the Strand Theatre, whose management have placed me on their mailing list for advance notices of films. Chaplin has been greatly hampered in the past by the execrable taste of his directors. Not one in ten of the old "Keystone" comedies could be witnessed without disgust; & after the comedian graduated from them, their traditions could not help but cling slightly to him. Time will enable him to assert his individuality more completely above the commonplace conventions of cinematographic buffoonery. Fairbanks, as you say, doubtless has much less of actual genius. I am fond of watching his pictures because there is a certain wholesomeness present, which the Chaplin type sometimes lacks. The atmosphere of squalor too often clouds the merit of the Chaplin plays. After a time, the fastidious eye tires of looking at rags & dirt; & turns gratefully to the breezy, captivating antics of the more human if less artistic Fairbanks. It is an old maxim in fiction & the drama, that a hero should be such that every man in the audience can imagine himself in that character. Fairbanks might well represent any virile young American, but what spectator could fancy himself a Chaplin? Both have their place, & the loss of either would subtract sadly from the gaiety of nations. . . .

I am, my dear Sir,
Ever yr. most oblig'd, humble, & Obedient Servant,
L. Theobald, Junr.

28. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Nov. 8, 1917

My dear Kleiner: —

Loveman has become reinstated in the United through me. Jew or not, I am rather proud to be his sponsor for the second advent to the Association. His poetical gifts are of the highest order, & I doubt if the amateur world can boast his superior. The Laureateship, should he enter his work, rests betwixt him & Lowrey. His variety of ideas, facility of expression, & background of classical & antiquarian knowledge, place him in the front rank.

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Another recent production of mine, which I will enclose, has a very different metre & appeal. I think I shall send this piece—*Nemesis*—to *The Vagrant*, since Cook seems fond of the unusual. It was written in the sinister small hours of the black morning after Hallowe'en, which may account for the colouring & atmosphere! It presents the conception, tenable to the orthodox mind, that nightmares are the punishment

meted out to the soul for sins committed in previous incarnations—perhaps millions of years ago! The hybrid metre, a cross betwixt that of Poe's *Ulalume* & Swinburne's *Hertha*, ought to satisfy the couplet-hating souls of yourself & Mo!

I remain, Sir, ever yr most oblig'd, humble, obedient Servt
Ludovicus Theobaldus, Junr.

29. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

December 23, 1917

My dear Kleiner:—

..... As to letters, my case is peculiar. I write such things exactly as easily and as rapidly as I would utter the same topics in conversation; indeed, epistolary expression is with me largely replacing conversation, as my condition of nervous prostration becomes more and more acute. I cannot bear to talk much now, and am becoming as silent as the Spectator himself! My loquacity expends itself on paper. This habit gives to my letters a certain careless atmosphere and lack of rhetorical precision which I fear make an unfavourable impression upon my more scholarly correspondents; but these gentlemen I would admonish to regard my communications not as studied letters, but as fragments of discourse, spoken with the negligence of oral intercourse rather than the formal correctness of literary correspondence. A purist might easily pick an hundred flaws in any page of my letters, but I trust they do not interfere with the right understanding of what I say.

My questionnaire arrived yesterday, and I discussed it with the head physician of the local draft board—who happens to be a family friend and even a remote relative. I wished, if possible, to place myself in class I, so that I might help in a clerical way as much as I could—as a typist, clerk, or something of the sort. But he knew too much of my constitutional ailments, and directed me to class myself in Class V. Div. G.—totally and permanently unfit. This will be later acted upon by himself and his two associate physicians, but he does not think a reversal very likely; so that I fear whatever service I give the government must be unofficial and strictly voluntary. As he pointed out, my lack of physical endurance would make me a hindrance rather than a help in

any work requiring schedule and discipline; also, my manifold weaknesses make me unable to endure any conditions of living except those of a comfortable home. Any work under military auspices would require my presence at camps and various places to which a physician would be loath to consign one of my condition. It is not flattering to be reminded of my utter uselessness twice within the space of six months, but the war is a great exposer of human failings and inefficience. Had not my mother disturbed my ambitious effort of last May, in which I utilised my absurdly robust-looking exterior as a passport to martial glory in the National Guard, I should now be digging trenches, drilling, and pounding a typewriter at Fort Standish in Boston Harbour, where the 9th Co. R. I. Coast Artillery is placed at present. I wonder if a strictly amateur writer would be in any way acceptable to "The Vigilantes", of whom so much is heard lately. Theirs is a worthy work, and a very necessary one in view of the subtle anti-government propaganda which remains to be combatted. You may be able to render valuable service in time—I believe you are a trained accountant or something of the sort. There is much need of skilful clerical assistance in various governmental departments.

As to the general situation, it seems very discouraging just now. It may take a second war to adjust things properly. I tremble to think of the possibilities of the Russian collapse—which may open the resources of a vast country to the enemy. If the predicted Western drive of the Huns succeeds, the war is virtually lost. There is something the matter with the morale of the more polished nations—they need a little more brutality of the ancient Teutonic sort. No army can win without a certain savage lust of combat, and this spirit is being undermined with the current cant about democracy, idealism, and all that sort of rot. The issues should be made clearer—the fight is not in the interests of a coming millenium of social reform; it is for hearth and home—for existing institutions against a perilous invasion of an unnatural culture. Racial factors are also against us. For all our Roman civilisation, the enemy has the preponderance of superior blood. If all the Allied nations were as thoroughly Teutonic as Prussia, the end would be nearer and happier. Nothing can withstand the might of the Teuton—he is the logical successor of the Roman in power. Teutonic blood snatched Britain from the Celt and made England the greatest force in all civilisation. Teutonic blood conquered the Western wilderness and gave

America an instant place amongst the great nations of the globe. But this blood has become so extensively and tragically diluted, that the non-German Teutons may well look with concern to their future. The grotesque fallacy of the "Great American Melting Pot" may yet be brought home to the people in one of the most tear-stained pages of their history. Germany herself has set a truer valuation on the importance of unmixed blood, but may yet come to grief through the absorption of Slavic elements. The course of Germany during the last half-century has been one of curiously mixed merit. Certain scientific and philosophical developments have been marvellous, yet they have been conjoined to a brutality and narrowness of vision which threaten the development of civilisation. The pan-Teutonic ideal, attainable only by a complete and amicable coöperation between Anglo-Saxon and Germanic races, has been fallaciously subordinated to a petty pan-Germanic ideal which is bringing about the virtual suicide of the Teutonic race, and driving Anglo-Saxons and Germans into equally unnatural alliances with alien races. The Saxon has his Hindoos and Moors, and the German his Turks. Progress is at a standstill, and everything human is lost in a mad scramble for a material victory. Even a recurrence of the Dark Ages is not possible—a recurrence which will leave the Teutonic race so depleted numerically that the world's future is seriously threatened. Wilhelm, Wilhelm! What has thou wrought?

I remain,
Most sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

30. TO ALFRED GALPIN

598 Angell Street
Providence, R.I.
Jany. 26, 1918

Dear Hasting:—

This is just a note to display to you the latest feat of my slow-moving wit, regarding the name of the book you recommended to me: *Etidorpha.*

This name, obviously Hellenic, puzzled me; since I assumed it to be a compound of *ETI.* Then I saw light, and perceived that the initial

E might as easily be *Eta* as an *Epsilon*—thus: HTIAOΡΦA (Etidorpha). Now what is this, unless it be *Aphrodite* (Ἀφροδιτη) *written backwards?* Thus you see, my dear Niplag, that I have made a discovery! At least, it appears to be a discovery; though I cannot for the life of me conceive why a reversed Aphrodite should have anything to do with metaphysics and the philosophy of the ultimate. I should like to see this curious Ἠτιδόρφα (Etidorpha). Of course, I *may* be all at sea about this name—*but* if it be a coincidence, 'tis one of the most singular coincidences I ever encountered. I spent full half an hour looking up an hypothetical word δορφα (dorpha) in Liddel and Scott's Greek Lexicon, to match the supposed *ETI,* before the analogy dawned upon me!

Trusting you are not completely prostrated by that massive letter of a few days ago, I remain most humbly and respectively yours,

L. P. Drawoh.

31. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Providence, R.I.
Feby. 3, 1918

My dear Mo:—

. . . . . I must rest content as a hardened worldling, and suffer the scorn of the godly—though I honestly believe, without undue conceit, that my moral code in no way falls below the strictest ideals of the psalm-singer and pulpit-pounder. I am no great success in this world, and doubtless will not be in the next, but when it comes to a catalogue of crimes and evils I really cannot think of any worse offense than writing bad verse and not rolling my "rrr . . .s". I suppose, though, that a true theologian would say I have no positive virtue, since I am not tempted to evil. I just glide along in my uneventful loquacious way, doing what seems to me right and logical. I have no inclination to do anything else. But if I had liquorish, homicidal, and thieving tendencies, and called in the Holy Ghost to conquer them, I should doubtless be one of the Lord's Anointed! . . . .

I am, Sir, ever your most oblig'd obedient Servt.
Lo.

32. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Feby. 23, 1918

My dear Kleiner:—

. . . . . I duly filled out a questionnaire some time ago, referring the medical authorities to National Guard rejection records if they should prove curious about my physical condition. They seem to have been satisfied, for they placed me as disabled—Class V Div. G. without the formality of an examination. One of the board, who is acquainted with the family, told my mother I could never have gotten so far with him as I did with poor Major Calder of the R.I.N.G. That was an artistic piece of lying—my most extensive misdemeanour in the art of untruthfulness! But I hated to be left out if there was any chance of volunteering. The company I would have been in was a splendid one, (9th C.A.C.) whose Captain chatted with the enlisted men just as though an unbreakable barrier were not supposed to exist between him & them! This company, now in Federal Service as the 55th Co., made a trip to Providence lately & gave an entertainment in the Strand Theatre. It made me feel so—shut out—left behind—that I could not bear to attend! It has developed into a fine company now, the group photograph shewing a splendid array of virile young men. If my health could have borne me along, I half believe I should have been at least a non-commissioned officer by this time, for I intended to study hard indeed. I half thought, that if I could hold out long enough, I might obtain even a commission. I should like one very much, since a clear majority of my friends now have them. But I suppose, as the doctor said, that I have no real idea of what a soldier has to undergo physically in even the smoothest of camp or barrack life. At any rate, he decided that a man who cannot stay up all day as a civilian, is not exactly a General in the making. So here I set scribbling, & here I seem likely to sit indefinitely. . . .

. . . . . Your philosophy is a very sensible sort to have—& in the end I suppose is not so remote from mine. What does it all amount to, anyway? In a few million years there will be no human race at all. Man, at best, is but an incident—& a very trifling incident—in the limitless history of Nature. I am inclined to think that all entity evolves in

cycles—that sooner or later everything occurs practically all over again. Not that all details are necessarily alike—but that general forms & principles are repeated. Planets are born, die, & are born again—& so on without end. It really makes one quite dizzy to think of such expanded matters! Possibly it is better to be near-sighted & orthodox like Mo, trusting all to a Divine Providence, R. I.

Yr obedient & humble servt
HLovecraft

33. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

April 4, 1918

My dear Kleiner:—

Verse of H. P. Lovecraft, published in amateur press from 1914 to 1918.

1914

On a Modern Lothario—Blarney-Stone, Jul.-Aug.
Acrostic-satire on article by W. E. Griffin.
To the Pinfeather Club—Pinfeather, November.
To the Rev. Jas. T. Pyke—United Official Quarterly, Nov.
To Gen. Villa—Blarney-Stone, Nov.-Dec.

1915

1914—Interesting Items, March.
March—United Amateur, March.
The Simple Speller's Tale—Conservative, April.
Versified version of epigram from *Piper—Conservative*, April.
Elegy on Rv. F. C. Clark—Prov. News, April 29.
Quinsnicket Park—Badger, June.
To the U.A.P.A. from the P.A.P.C.—Providence Amateur, June.
On the Bay-Stater's Policy—Bay Stater, June.
On a N. E. Village Seen by Moonlight—Trail, Summer.
The Crime of Crimes—Interesting Items, July.
Fragment on Whitman—Conservative, July.
The Magazine Poet—United Amateur, October.

The State of Poetry—*Conservative*, October.
Gems from In a Minor Key—*Conservative*, October.
The Isaacsonio-Mortoniad—unpublished.
On the Cowboys of the West—*Plainsman*, December.
To Saml Loveman, Esq.—*Bearcat*, December.
A Mississippi Autumn (versified from prose by Mrs. Renshaw)—*Ole Miss.*, Dec.

1916

A Rural Summer Eve—*Trail*, January.
On Receiving a Picture of Swans—*Conservative*, January.
An American to Mother England—*Poesy*, January.
The Bookstall—*United Official Quarterly*, January.
The Teuton's Battle-Song—*United Amateur*, February.
To the Late J. H. Fowler, Esq.—*Scot.* March.
Temperance Song—*Dixie Booster*, Spring.
The Power of Wine—*Tryout*, April.
R. Kleiner, Laureatus, in Heliconem—*Conservative*, April.
Content—*United Amateur*, June.
The Beauties of Peace—*Prov. News*, June 27.
Respite—*Conservative*, October.
The Rose of England—*Scot*, October.
Brumalia—*Tryout*, December.

By Lewis Theoball, Jun.

The Bride of the Sea—*Providence Amateur*, February.
Ye Ballade of Patrick von Flynn—*Conservative*, April.
Inspiration—*Conservative*, October.
Brotherhood—*Tryout*, December.

Anonymously Published

To Charlie of the Comics—*Providence Amateur*, February.

1917

Elegy on Phillips Gamwell, Esq.—*Prov. News*, Jan. 5.
On Genl. Robert Edward Lee—*Coyote*, January.
Futurist Art—*Conservative*, January.
Fact and Fancy—*Tryout*, February.
On Receiving a Picture of the Marshes at Ipswich—*Merry Minutes*, March.

Percival Lowell—*Excelsior*, March.
To A. F. Lockhart—*Tryout*, March.
Britannia Victura—*Inspiration*, April.
Iterum Conjunctae—*Tryout*, May.
To Templeton and Mount Monadnock—*Vagrant*, June.
Prologue (to Mr. Hoag's poem)—*Tryout*, July.
Ode for July 4, 1917—*United Amateur*, July.
On the Death of a Rhyming Critic—*Toledo Amateur*, July.
The Smile—*Little Budget*, September.
Autumn—*Tryout*, November.
To Greece—*Vagrant*, November.
An American to the British Flag—*Little Budget*, December.
25th Anniv. Evening News—*Tryout*, December.

by Lewis Theobald, Jun.

The Rutted Road—*Tryout*, January.
The Nymph's Reply—*Tryout*, February.
Pacifist War Song—*Tryout*, March.
The Poet of Passion—*Tryout*, June.
Sunset—*Tryout*, December.

ascribed to the traitor John T. Dunn

On Graduation from R. I. Hospital School of Nurses—*Tryout*, February.

Anonymous

To M. W. M.—*United Amateur*, July.
To the Nurses of the Red Cross—unpublished.

1918

The Volunteer—*Prov. News*, Feby. 1.
A Winter Wish—*Tryout*, February.
To Jonathan Hoag, Esq.—*Eurus*, February.
April—*Tryout*, March.
Ver Rusticum—*Vagrant*, to appear soon.
A Garden—*Vagrant*, to appear soon.
Nemesis—*Vagrant*—to appear soon.
The Poe-et's Nightmare—*Vagrant*, to appear soon (written 1916).
Ad Britannas, 1918—*Little Budget*, to appear soon.

By Ward Phillips

Astrophobas—United Amateur, January.

By Ames Dorrance Rersley

Laeta; A Lament—Tryout, February.

What a mess of mediocre & miserable junk. He hath sharp eyes indeed, who can discover any trace of merit in so worthless an array of bad verse.

I remain
yr most obt humble Servt
HLovecraft

34. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell St.
Providence, R.I.
May 15, 1918

My dear Mo:—

I am interested in your experiences as a phonograph star. Something over a decade ago I conceived the idea of displacing Sig. Caruso as the world's greatest lyric vocalist, and accordingly inflicted some weird and wondrous ululations upon a perfectly innocent Edison blank. My mother actually liked the results—mothers are not always unbiased critics—but I saw to it that an accident soon removed the incriminating evidence. Later I tried something less ambitious; a simple, touching, plaintive, ballad sort of thing a la John McCormack. This was a better success, but reminded me so much of the wail of a dying fox-terrier that I very carelessly happened to drop it soon after it was made. I have since confined my artistic talents to literature. . . .

Your wonderment 'what I have against religion' reminds me of your recent *Vagrant* essay—which I had the honour of perusing in manuscript some three years ago. To my mind, that essay *misses one point altogether*. Your "agnostic" has neglected to mention the very crux of all agnosticism—namely that the Judaeo-Christian mythology is NOT TRUE. I can see that in your philosophy *truth per se* has so small a

place, that you can scarcely realise what it is that Galpin and I are insisting upon. In your mind, MAN is the centre of everything, and his exact conformation to certain regulations of conduct HOWEVER EFFECTED, the only problem in the universe. Your world (if you will pardon my saying so) is *contracted*. All the mental vigour and erudition of the ages fail to disturb your complacent endorsement of empirical doctrines and purely pragmatical notions, because you voluntarily limit your horizon—*excluding certain facts, and certain undeniable mental tendencies of mankind*. In your eyes, man is torn between *only two* influences; the degrading instincts of the savage, and the temperate impulses of the philanthropist. To you, men are of but two classes—lovers of self and lovers of the race. To you, men have but two types of emotion—self-gratification, to be combatent; and altruism, to be fostered. But you, consciously or unconsciously, are leaving out a vast and potent *tertium quid*—making an omission which cannot but interfere with the validity of your philosophical conceptions. You are forgetting a human impulse which, despite its restriction to a relatively small number of men, has all through history proved itself as real and as vital as hunger—as potent as thirst or greed. I need not say that I refer to that simplest yet most exalted attribute of our species—the acute, persistent, unquenchable craving TO KNOW. Do you realise that to many men it makes a vast and profound difference whether or not the things about them are as they appear? Let me use an analogy, since you love concreteness. You recognise a difference between mere pleasure and true happiness. As a consistent theologian, you must chaw this distinction. You point to two men; one a merely frivolous creature, amusing himself by drowning his cares in wine or gaiety; the other a conscientious worker of good, who takes satisfaction in knowing that he is properly adjusted to society and his fellowmen. Both are equally contented, but you will undoubtedly say that only the second man is truly happy. You will say, and rightly, that the joy of the first man is mere mental apathy; and that if ever he should be forced to think about himself and his relation to others around him, he would be acutely dissatisfied—would seek to find his place in life and thereby satisfy the new misgivings which thought aroused in him. But at this point you and other orthodox thinkers find it expedient to "draw a herring across the trail" and turn to other lines of investigation. For the very distinction you draw between empty pleasure and true happiness

mind and will like my own infinitely magnified; a potent and purposeful consciousness which deals individually and directly with the miserable denizens of a wretched little flyspeck on the back door of a microscopic universe, and which singles this putrid excrescence out as the one spot whereto to send an onlie-begotten Son, whose mission is to redeem these accursed flyspeck-inhabiting lice which we call human beings—bah!! Pardon the "bah!" I feel several "bahs!", but out of courtesy I only say one. But it is all so very childish. I cannot help taking exception to a philosophy which would force this rubbish down my throat. 'What have I against religion?' That is what I have against it! (Do not mistake me—I have a great deal *for* it as well. I do *not* 'deny it a place in the life of the world'. I am coming to this about twenty or thirty pages farther on!!)

Now let us view *morality*—which despite your preconceived classification and identification has nothing to do with any particular form of religion. Morality is the adjustment of matter to its environment—the natural arrangement of molecules. More especially it may be considered as dealing with organic molecules. Conventionally it is the science of reconciling the animal *homo* (more or less) *sapiens* to the forces and conditions with which he is surrounded. It is linked with religion only so far as the natural elements it deals with are deified and personified. Morality antedated the Christian religion, and has many times risen superior to co-existent religions. It has powerful support from very non-religious human impulses. Personally, I am intensely moral and intensely irreligious. My morality can be traced to two distinct sources, scientific and aesthetic. My love of truth is outraged by the flagrant disturbance of sociological relations involved in so-called "wrong"; whilst my aesthetic sense is outraged and disgusted with the violations of taste and harmony thereupon attendant. But to me the question presents no ground for connection with the grovelling instinct of religion. However— you may exclude me from the argument, if you will. I *am* unduly secluded though unavoidably so. We will deal only with materials which may presumably lie within my feeble reach. Only one more touch of ego. I am *not* at all passive or indifferent in my zeal for a high morality. But I cannot consider morality the essence of religion as you seem to do. In discussing religion, the whole fabric must bear examination before the uses or purposes are considered. We must investigate the cause as well as alleged effects if we are to define the

relation between the two, and the reality of the former. And more, granting that the phenomenon of faith is indeed the true cause of the observed moral effects; the absolute basis of that phenomenon remains to be examined. The issue between theists and atheists is certainly not, as you seem to think, the mere question of whether religion is useful or detrimental. In your intensely pragmatical mind, this question stands paramount—to such an extent that you presented no other subject of discussion in your very clever *Vagrant* article. But the "agnostic" of your essay must have been a very utilitarian agnostic (that such "utilitarian Agnostics" do exist, I will not deny. *Vide* any issue of *The Truthseeker!* But are they typical?)! What the honest thinker wishes to know, has nothing to do with complex human conduct. He simply demands a scientific *explanation* of the things he sees. His only animus toward the church concerns its deliberate inculcation of demonstrable untruths in the community. This is human nature. No matter how white a lie may be—no matter how much good it may do—we are always more or less disgusted by its diffusion. The honest agnostic regards the church with respect for what it has done in the direction of virtue. He even supports it if he is magnanimous, and he certainly does nothing to impair whatever public usefulness it may possess. But in private, he would be more than a mere mortal if he were able to suppress a certain abstract resentment, or to curb the feeling of humour and so-called irreverence which inevitably arises from the contemplation of pious fraud, howsoever high-minded and benevolent.

The good effects of Christianity are neither to be denied, nor lightly esteemed, though candidly I will admit that I think them overrated.

...

But lest you think I have wandered far from my previously expressed respect for religion as a lever to move the masses, let me reaffirm that respect. I recognise the power of the primal—which amongst the illiterate, semi-literate, and a few of the literate, is a force capable of much good if skillfully wielded. Conversely, I recognise the dangerous potentialities of an ignorantly atheistical mob—a mob whose atheism comes not from thought, but from copying others. All rationalism tends to minimise the value and importance of life, and to decrease the sum total of human happiness. In many cases the truth may cause suicidal or nearly suicidal depression. Therefore, I concede that the church deserves support as long as it can exist, and that agnosticism ought

never to be diffused artificially. Yea, more. I will concede that men of religion are justified in hindering the spread of agnosticism among those whose opinions are not particularly settled, and who might easily be swayed either way. But ordinary sense tells us that faith cannot hang on forever. After the war chaos there will be an inevitable reaction toward hard facts. The time is coming when the old formulae will cease to enchant, for nothing can last eternally which is not founded on demonstrable truth. And for that future we must provide while there is time. Without attacking religion in any way, let us admit that virtue and honour are possible outside its charmed circle. Let us cultivate morality as an independent principle. Let us cultivate philanthropy for its own sake. True, religion has hitherto done marvels for these things—but religion will some day perish, and these things must never perish. . . .

Your most oblig'd Obt. Humble Servt.
Lo.

35. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Nowhere
May 27, 1918—10 p.m.

O thou of microscopic years but telescopic mind:—

. . . . . I am glad that you cannot know the deadly fatigue and lethargy which accompany a state of health such as that under which I have been staggering for ten years and more. At times the very effort of sitting up is insupportable, and the least added exertion brings on a sort of dull tiredness which soon shews itself in the lagging brilliancy and occasional incoherence of my literary and epistolary productions. . . .

. . . Instinct is born in the young animal *in full working order*—all the major instincts are at once capable of expression, and require absolutely no *instruction* for development. The young animal or human (pardon the distinction—I do not make it scientifically) would develop the same instincts if utterly isolated and without external impressions. Young lions do not have to be taught their fierceness, nor human beings their greedy treacherousness. The qualities are innate and unconnected with the genuine intellectual faculty. Turning to reason, we

see that it is only a *capacity*—not an automatically working function—which may or may not be developed according to environment. You refer to the *instinctive* uses of very simple reasoning processes—the addition of two and three to obtain five, as you express it. Now I believe that this is not *inborn*, but that it is the result of elementary observation. Only the *capacity* is inborn. On the other hand, the cry of a child for food is instinctive and inborn, as *is* its automatic flinching if approached by a seemingly menacing object, or its fear of the dark—or any of those things which develop without so much as a glance at surroundings or hint of instruction. Let me elaborate: I maintain, rightly or not, I leave for you to judge—that a human being born without the five senses and utterly isolated from intercourse with the world, would *never* develop the slightest trace of manifested rationality, even though endowed with a mind of high grade and perfect soundness. That same man, if trained by particular methods, might become a genius. BUT—the *instinctive* processes of that man would develop exactly the same in either case! . . .

. . . I am only about half alive—a large part of my strength is consumed in sitting up or walking. My nervous system is a shattered wreck, and I am absolutely bored and listless save when I come upon something which peculiarly interests me. However—so many things *do* interest me, and interest me intensely, in science, history, philosophy, and literature; that I have never actually desired to die, or entertained any suicidal designs, as might be expected of one with so little kinship to the ordinary features of life.

. . . My innate concentration is so complete that I cannot be diverted from a subject by any amount of digression of the part of those with whom I may be conversing. I am the direct antithesis of the person who says— "Yes, I wrote that last Friday; you know, the day we went down town and met John Smith who had just bought such a pretty cottage in Riverside, where the Joneses live—you know, the Joneses that are related to the Browns who used to live in Auburn—and by the way, isn't it too bad how the fare has been raised to seven cents on the car line to Auburn; oh, I think these war prices are terrible—what a terrible war it is, anyhow! I wonder how this new German offensive will be met—and—dear me! What *was* I talking about?"

As to "Sherlock Holmes"—I used to be infatuated with him! I read every Sherlock Holmes story published, and even organised a *detective*

agency when I was thirteen, arrogating to myself the proud pseudonym of S. H. . . .

About current detective stories—I have read only a few, which I happened to stumble upon in the ordinary course of human events. Most of them seem to me too artificial to be interesting. . . .

About the word *peruse*—possibly I do employ it to excess, but Mr. Addison was ever my model of style in prose. . . . Addison hath never been surpassed in grace, and the most pleasing of American essayists, Mr. Washington Irving, obtains much of his charm and urbanity by a close adherence to the manner of the older and greater writer.

Note the *envelope* in which this missive will reach you—unless it bursts or pines away and dies. It is home-made, an excellent example of Theobaldian craftsmanship. Wherefore, sayest thou? I reply! I am all out of envelopes, and not wishing to encroach on my mother's rather different supply, have utilised my matchless constructive skill in supplying my needs. This is an age of conservation, and I fancy I have made good use of waste paper.

Have I been too boresome! Pray let me hear from you when you have recovered.: Yr. obt. humble Servt.:

L. Theobald Junr.

36. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

June 27, 1918

My dear Klei:—

My *Hesperia* will be critical & educational in object, though I am "sugar-coating" the first number by "printing" a conclusion of the serial *The Mystery of Murdon Grange*. I will shew it to you when you call. It is outwardly done on the patchwork plan as before—each chapter bears one of my different *aliases*—Ward Phillips—Ames Dorrance Rowley—L. Theobold, &c. It was rather a good diversion to write it. Really, I think I could have been a passable dime novelist if I had been trained in that noble calling! .....

I am, Sir, Ever yr. most oblig'd obedient Servt

Lo

37. TO ALFRED GALPIN

598 Angell Street
Providence, R.I.
August 21, 1918

Theobaldus Tertius, Esq./Esteem'd Godson:—

..... It is rather fortunate we ran across each other, since we are both dwellers in a rather singular region of thought, with few near at hand to share our views. My family are as delightful and kind as any family could be—my mother is a positive marvel of consideration—but none the less I am not thought any particular credit socially—I am awkward and unpleasing—much more so than you, I am certain. Comparing us, I find you most like me of anyone I know—yet with real impartiality I must concede the brighter mentality to you. Your rate of assimilation really surpasses mine by far. To trace, for instance, my philosophical views. I began to study astronomy late in 1902—age 12. My interest came through two sources—discovery of an old book of my grandmother's in the attic, and a previous interest in physical geography. Within a year I was thinking of virtually nothing but astronomy, yet my keenest interest did not lie outside the solar system. I think I really ignored the abysses of space in my interest in the habitability of the various planets of the solar system. My observations (for I purchased a telescope early in 1903) were confined mostly to the moon and the planet Venus. You will ask, why the latter, since its markings are doubtful even in the largest instruments? I answer—this very MYSTERY was what attracted me. In boyish egotism I fancied I might light upon something with my poor little 2¼-inch telescope which had eluded the users of the 40-inch Yerkes telescope!! And to tell the truth, I think the moon interested me more than anything else—the very nearest object. I used to sit night after night absorbing the minutest details of the lunar surface, till today I can tell you of every peak and crater as though they were the topographical features of my own neighbourhood. I was highly angry at Nature for withholding from my gaze the other side of our satellite! It was not till 1904 that I dabbled much in philosophy, and even then I used to smile at extravagant speculation. I had always been an agnostic because I saw no proof of Deity, but I was not by any means a cosmic sage. My real philosophical interest began

when I was just your age—1906. I then set about writing a book—a complete treatise on astronomy—and in doing so I resolved to use all the best material at hand. I would not write till I had made myself absolute master of my subject. Wherefore I commenced a campaign of intensive reading, devouring everything I could find on astronomy. This perforce turned my attention to the structure of the universe, and to problems in cosmogony, and literally obtruded upon my attention the matters of infinity and eternity which have since interested me so keenly. Before 1907 I was deep in speculation, and have not been able to get out yet! When I look back, I can see that I always held the idea of the earth's insignificance—but it was in a passive way before 1906. I knew it, but it made no impression on my thought. I was a great reformer then—(in my own mind), and had high ideas about uplifting the masses. I came across a superficially bright Swedish boy in the Public Library—he worked in the "stack" where the books are kept—and invited him to the house to broaden his mentality (I was fifteen and he was about the same, though he was smaller and seemed younger.) I thought I had uncovered a mute inglorious Milton (he professed a great interest in my work), and despite maternal protest entertained him frequently in my library. I believed in equality then, and removed him where he called my mother "Ma'm"—I said that a future scientist should not talk like a servant! But ere long he uncovered qualities which did not appeal to me, and I was forced to abandon him to his plebeian fate. I think the experience educated me more than it educated him—I have been more of a cynick since that time! He left the library (by request) and I never saw him more. . . .

Sincerely, gratefully, and godpaternally yours,:
Ludovius Theobaldus Secundas.

38. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

598 Angell Street
Providence, Rhode Island
August 24, 1918

Estimable Mrs. Browning-Lover:—

. . . And now concerning Mr. Alfred Galpin, Junior, Sage, Singer, Scientist, born Nov. 8, 1901. ..... He was twelve when

Moe first knew him. Moe was called in to tutor him for an examination, but soon found that the lad needed little help. At the very first session Galpin, instead of being taught, himself taught Moe a new way to extract cube root! ..... but high-school made him a more serious thinker, and in his second year he was moved to deep study. The curriculum was too slow for him, and one assignment in class would by a chain of thought cause him to read volume after volume—allusions in everything he read he was aided by his marvellous acquisitive and retentive powers. He had but to glance over a page to become complete and permanent master of its contents. Naturally, he joined Moe's press club, but for some reason or other did not come into the United. About this time he formulated a system of philosophy really astonishing for one of his years—and which, interestingly enough, comes nearest to my own beliefs of any system I have ever known. He was not content to let mankind and his little earth serve as the centre of things—he recognised our significance in the midst of absolute eternity and absolute infinity. When a lad of fourteen or fifteen thinks vividly and imaginatively of these matters, he cannot justly be described as other than a prodigy. ..... Galpin first dawned above my horizon a year ago, when as President I was looking about for a fourth vice-president to appoint. I had tried Joseph Harriman, then considered the brightest high-school boy in the Association, but he had graduated and gone to college, so recommended Galpin to me as a very likely candidate. I immediately wrote Galpin, expecting of course a hesitant, school-boyish reply. To my surprise, there came back a sparkling letter, full of mature wit and polish, accepting the office, and expressing a desire to enter more fully into amateur journalism. Since then we have become the closest of friends and correspondents, averaging three long letters per week. On more intimate acquaintance, Galpin drops a bit of his mature gravity and shows the genuine boyishness in him—but I like him the more for it, since it takes me back to my own youth. Always a recluse, with no varied events of life to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood, I have retained more of the old juvenile point of view and sympathy than I would care to acknowledge publicly. I have grown up without knowing it, and am at times almost alarmed at the unbelievable fact that I am getting on in years. Wherefore Galpin seems like a breath of ancient naturalness—like an awakening to boyhood after a strange dream of growing up to be twenty-eight years old! It is so easy to take up the thread of youth again with

a youthful correspondent, and no immediate visible signs of my advanced age. It is hard for me to realise that eleven years separate me from Galpin, for his thoughts fit in so well with my own. I am convinced that he has a mighty future. He is passing me already in the intellectual race, and in a few years will have left me behind completely. . . .

I subscribe myself
yr. most obedient humble servant
H. Lovecraft

39. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Dept. of Publick Criticism, Office of Chairman
Will's Coffee-House/Russell-Street
Covent-Garden, London
August 25, 1718

Revered Executive:—

Concerning a local American tone in the contents and decoration of a library, I confess I share not your scruples. I cannot feel any real difference betwixt the States and the Motherland, and believe there ought not to be. As you doubtless know, I do not favour the Colonial side of the Revolution, and should have stood by the King had I been alive in 1776. I am part and parcel of an age when Anglo-Saxondom was one and undivided—and I do not feel very wicked or abnormal when I saw that I would give my life quite as freely for the old flag as for the new. It was in August, 1914, that my spirit "entered the war"—for King and Empire! Reckoning Anglo-Saxondom as a unit, I disregard recent political boundaries in choosing favourite authors. Of my prime favourites one (A. Pope) was of the old land, and another (E. A. Poe) of the new. I am not an Anglomaniac to the point of anti-Americanism—I am merely a Colonial Tory of the *ancient regime*, loving my native town of Providence, my native colony of Rhode-Island, and my ancestral and all-including circle of civilisation—Britannia's! I live in the vague hope of a reunion some day—and could not by any process of reasoning convince myself inwardly that I am not a loyal Englishman and faithful subject of H. M. George V. In early

childhood, even, I used to insist to my somewhat shocked grandfather that the real super-ruler was Queen Victoria. I am no traitor to the States, but there never was a more thorough, ingrained, and absolute Queen-Anne British Colonial than L. Theobald Junr.! God Save Ye King!

In the non-personal family library we have a large number of American books, against which I hold no prejudice, and some of which I have read. But my partiality for 18th century work of course makes my reading preponderantly of the old land. I like the novels of J. Fenimore Cooper and of N. Hawthorne, and the verse of O. W. Holmes. The critical dissertations of J. R. Lowell likewise gratify my taste. Recently my discussion with Galpin hath led me to look over the essays of R. Emerson, Esq., of Concord, (Galpin sent me an exquisite little gift book de luxe for a birthday present last Tuesday—Emerson's essay on *Culture*) whose work I had previously dismissed after a mere skimming over. On second perusal, I find Mr. Emerson not altogether wanting in good sense, tho' I much prefer my older friend Mr. Addison. In enumerating American authors, I nearly forgot my early favourite Mr. Irving, of New-York, since I think of him half as an Englishman. Him do I admire vastly, both in themes and style, and deem his prose a masterpiece of harmony and model of elegance.

Then I have my pet detestations amongst the later English. Chas. Dickens I cannot bear, and R. Kipling I can only tolerate. A. Tennyson fatigues me, and after a time W. Thackeray induceth drowsiness. It seems to me that A. C. Swinburne was the only real poet either in England or America since the death of Mr. Poe. Decidedly, I find something missing in literature later than Dr. Johnson's day! 'Twou'd shock you monstrously, no doubt, were I to tell you that of Ld. Byron's verse, I enjoy *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers most!*

Ever yr. most oblig'd, most obt.
humble Servt.
Edw. Softly

40. TO ALFRED GALPIN

598 Angell Street
Providence, R.I.
Aug. 29, 1848 (1918)

Edgar A. Poe, Esq.
Appleton, Wis.
My dear Mr. Poe:—

The science of chemistry, in which I am glad to find you interested, first captivated me in the Year of Our Lord 1898—in a rather peculiar way. With the insatiable curiosity of early childhood, I used to spend hours poring over the pictures in the back of Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary*—absorbing a miscellaneous variety of ideas. After familiarising myself with antiquities, mediaeval dress and armour, birds, animals, reptiles, fishes, flags of all nations, heraldry, etc., etc., I lit upon the section devoted to "Philosophical and Scientific Instruments", I was veritably hypnotised with it. Chemical apparatus especially attracted me, and I resolved (before knowing a thing about the science!) to have a laboratory. Being a "spoiled child" I had but to ask, and it was mine. I was given a cellar room of good size, and provided by my elder aunt (who had studied chemistry at boarding school) with some simple apparatus and a copy of *The Young Chemist*—beginner's manual by Prof. John Howard Appleton of Brown—a personal acquaintance. *The Young Chemist* was just the book for me—devoted to easy and instructive experiments—and I was soon deep in its pages. The laboratory "work"—or play—seemed delightful, and despite a few mishaps, explosions, and broken instruments, I got along splendidly. Soon I acquired other books, and began (March 4, 1899) to issue a chemical magazine called *The Scientific Gazette*, which I maintained for eight years. This was, I suppose, my entry to amateur journalism! By 1901 or thereabouts I had a fair knowledge of the principles of chemistry and the details of the inorganic part—about the equivalent of a high-school course, and not including analysis of any kind. Then my fickle fancy turned away to the intensive study of geography, geology, anthropology, and above all *astronomy*, after which came a revival of classicism, Latinty, etc. Not until 1906 did chemistry come into my life again. In

that year I encountered *physics* in high-school, which reawaked my dormant laboratory instincts, and led me back to the study of matter, its constitution and properties. I increased my chemical library by fully twenty volumes—to say naught of the physics text books I bought—and obtained a plenitude of new instruments. I was now in a smaller house, with a smaller laboratory, but the new room was ample for the purpose. In 1907 I took chemistry in high-school, but since I knew all the course before, had more fun than instruction in the class room. I left high school certified in physics and chemistry, and intended to specialise in those subjects at college; but just then my nervous system went to pieces, and I was forced to relinguish all thought of activity. Yet at home I continued my chemical studies, dabbling in a correspondence course which helped me in matters of *analysis* and *organic chemistry*, hitherto neglected by me. But in the mean time literature had been on the increase once more, and I found my interest centering more and more in old-fashioned scribbling. By 1912 I had practically ceased to be active in chemistry, and have since partically dismantled my laboratory, owing to my mother's nervousness at having deadly poisons, corrosive acids, and potential explosives about the place. One tangible memorial of my hobby remains—a bulky manuscript entitled *A Brief Course in Inorganic Chemistry*, by H. P. Lovecraft, 1910. There is also a physical memorial—the third finger of my right hand—whose palm side is permanently scarred by a mighty phosphorus burn sustained in 1907. At the time, the loss of the finger seemed likely, but the skill of my uncle—a physician—saved it. It is still a bit stiff, and aches in cold weather—as no doubt it always will. During the bandage and splint days I had to pick out my verses and articles with my left forefinger only on the typewriter. . . .

. . . . . An infantile fondness for simple tunes led my mother to start me on violin lessons when I was seven years old, and through the insistence of a teacher who said I had musical genius, the farce was kept up for two years. I played the exercises because I had to—but abhorred all the classics that came before me, and for *pleasure* would go back to whistling those utterly light and frothy tunes which I really enjoyed. In 1899 violin practice made me so nervous that it was stopped by doctor's orders—and thus closeth one branch of L. Theobald's culture. To this day I have not improved, and though I revel in absolutely frivolous light opera and musical comedy airs, I cannot bear serious Music

with a Capital M. However, I am not so narrow that I do not understand its aesthetic value, and I never laugh at it in the manner of Lord North and other celebrated anti-musical personages. So fond am I of *light* and catchy music, that I tried to write a comic opera when about ten years old! . . .

With customary expressions of esteem, and the hope that I may ere long be favoured with an epistle from your direction, I beg ye honour, my dear Sir, to subscribe myself as: Yr. Most humble, most obedient Servt.: Alexander Pope.

41. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Nov., 1918

Romae.: A.D. XIV. Kal. Nov.: M. Rinartio.Clina.: A.Galpinio.Secvndo. Coss. L.METADIVS.CAELO. A. GALPINIO.SECVNDO. S.D. SI. TV. VALES. BENE. EST. EGO.QVOQVE.VALEO.

Continuing in the dramatick line, but ascending the scale several degrees, I find *Hamlet* a most absorbing character, even as you do. It is hard for me to give an original estimate or opinion, since other commentators' opinions are so abundant; but I find in Hamlet a rare, delicate, and nearly poetical mind, filled with the highest ideals and pervaded by the delusion (common to all gentle and retired characters unless their temperament be scientific and predominantly rational—which is seldom the case with poets) that all humanity approximates such a standard as he conceives. All at once, however, man's inherent baseness becomes apparent to him under the most soul-trying circumstances; exhibiting itself not in the remote world, but in the persons of his mother and his uncle, in such a manner as to convince him most suddenly and most vitally that there is no good in humanity. Well may he question life, when the perfidiousness of those whom he has reason to believe the best of mortals, is so cruelly obtruded on his notice. Having had his theories of life founded on mediaeval and pragmatical conceptions, he now loses that subtle something which impels persons to go on in the ordinary currents; specifically, he loses the convictions that the usual motives and pursuits of life are more than empty illusions or trifles. Now this is not *"madness"*—I am sick of hearing fools and

superficial criticks prate about "Hamlet's madness". It is really a distressing glimpse of *absolute truth*. But *in effect* it approximates mental derangement. Reason is unimpaired, but Hamlet sees no longer any occasion for its use. He perceives the objects and events about him, and their relation to each other and to himself, as clearly as before; but his new estimate of their importance, and his lack of any aim or desire to pursue an ordinary course amongst them, impart to his point of view such a contemptuous, ironical singularity, that he may well be thought a madman by mistake. . . .

Vale.: L.Metadivs.Caelo.

42. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Decr. 4, 1918

My dear Klei:—

. . . . . Like you I am absolutely devoid of actual friends outside of correspondence. Those whom I knew in youth are all active and successful now—one a Major in the Regular Army, another a lawyer, another an Episcopal clergyman, another librarian of the R. I. Historical Society, etc., with any number of "rising young businessmen"—if I may employ a "rubber-stamp phrase". With such, a sickly recluse can have little or nothing in common;—their virile success and bustling prosperity but emphasises the melancholy of one whose active career ended at eighteen—if indeed it ever existed in more than a nominal sense. The only persons who could now be real friends, are those who never knew me in my days of high hope and expansive ambition; and who therefore expect no more from me than I am able to furnish. To them, I should exhibit no such ignominious decadence as I must to those who, from early acquaintance, took it for granted that I would go normally through the university, achieve a professorship, and by this time be a real person with a recognised place in the social and academic world, instead of a nonentity with absolutely nothing of real worth to justify existence. The other day I saw a featured article in the *New York Tribune* by one whose compositions I used to correct at Hope Street High-School! Could irony be greater? How are the tables turned! I may only thank the Fates that I am not embittered by the

failure which my invalidism has brought upon me. I do not hate or envy my old acquaintances—I merely wish to sink out of their sight if I cannot shew some achievements to match theirs. Nor am I like my old friend Dean Swift, embittered with all humanity. I see no cause to blame society or any individual; but simply prefer to have intimacy with those who have never known me save at my worst—which is now. I no more visit the Ladd Observatory or various other attractions of Brown University. Once I expected to utilise them as a regularly entered student, and some day perhaps control some of them as a faculty member. But having known them with this "inside" attitude, I am today unwilling to visit them as a casual outsider and non-university barbarian and alien. . . .

Yr. obt. hble. Servt:
Lo

43. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

1/18/19

Honourable Sir.—

My mother, feeling no better here, has gone on a visit to my elder aunt for purposes of complete rest; leaving my younger aunt as autocrat of this dwelling. My aunt does splendidly—but you above all others can imagine the effect of maternal illness & absence. I cannot eat, nor can I stay up long at a time. Pen-writing or typewriting nearly drives me insane. But my nervous system seems to find its vent in feverish & incessant scribbling with a pencil. I have written a great deal, though perhaps the results shew the effects of my condition. I am assured, however, that my mother's state is not dangerous; that the apparent stomach trouble is neurotic & not organic. She writes optimistic letters each day, & I try to make my replies equally optimistic; though I do not find it possible to "cheer up", eat, & go out, as she encourages me to do. Such infirmity & absence on her part is so *unprecedented*, that it cannot but depress me, despite the brightest bulletins of her physician—whom, by the way, she writes that she is now well enough to dismiss.

Yr oblig'd obt Servant
Lo

44. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

2/19/19

Most Esteemed Klei:

Things hereabouts go evenly, albeit distressingly slowly. I am up & about, & go to call on my mother each day. She considers herself improving, as does her physician; yet the tardiness of the process is most trying to me, as it must be to her. So far as exact mental labour is concerned, I am quite useless for the time being. Melancholy at times seems oppressive, & tends to inspire effusions like the following, which is my latest:

DESPAIR

by Ward Phillips

O'er the midnight moorlands crying,
Thro' the cypress forests sighing,
In the night-wind madly flying,
Hellish forms with streaming hair;
In the barren branches creaking,
By the stagnant swamp-pools speaking,
Past the shore-cliffs ever shrieking;
Damn'd daemons of despair.

Once, I think I half remember,
Ere the grey skies of November
Quench'd my youth's aspiring ember,
Liv'd there such a thing as bliss;
Skies that now are dark were beaming,
Gold and azure, splendid seeming
Till I learn'd it all was dreaming—
Deadly drowsiness of Dis.

But the stream of Time, swift-flowing,
Brings the torment of half-knowing—
Dimly rushing, blindly going
Past the never-trodden lea;
And the voyager, repining,

Sees the grisly death-fires shining,
Hears the wicked petrels whining
As he helpless drifts to sea.

Evil wings in aether beating;
Vultures at the spirit eating;
Things unseen forever fleeting
Black against the leering sky.

Ghastly shades of bygone gladness,
Clawing fiends of future sadness,
Mingle in a cloud of madness
Ever on the soul to lie.

Thus the living, lone and sobbing,
In the throes of anguish throbbing,
With the loathsome Furies robbing
Night and noon of peace and rest.
But beyond the groans and grating
Of abhorrent Life, is waiting
Sweet Oblivion, culminating
All the years of fruitless quest.

I am ever
Yr Obt Humble Servt
L. Theobald Jun^{r}.

45. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

March 19, 1919

My dear Klei:—

My mother, showing no signs of recovery, has gone to a hospital, where she is receiving the most expert care which medical science can afford. I strongly hope the change will benefit her. It has a good chance to do so, since many features of diet & regimen which the physicians are prescribing, are directly opposite to those prescribed by the previous practitioner. She herself seems satisfied with the treatment, & is more optimistic than at any time for a month before. My own energy is

spasmodic. For days at a time I can do nothing—but I wrote an entire March critical report one evening recently, & I am this morning able to write letters after having been up all night.

I beg to honour to subscribe myself as your

Most humble, most ob^{t} Serv^{t}
Lo

46. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

March 30, 1919

My dear Klei:—

I wish I could report equal improvement in my mother's case, but her condition is distressingly stationary. She has now gone to the best sanitarium in this state, where every curative agency known to science, & every phase of expert nursing, care, & diet, may be hers. Her sojourn there, however, will have to be of great duration; & I am obliged to look forward to a long & dreary interval wherein home will be but half a home for want of its dominant figure. The prospect is not a pleasing one; but I shall be thankful if any procedure, however protracted, can restore my mother to normal or nearly normal health. My nerve strain seems now to be manifesting itself in my vision—I am frequently dizzy, & cannot read or write long without a blurring of sight or a severe headache. Existence seems of little value, & I wish it might terminate!

I am ever Yr most humble, most ob^{t} Serv^{t}
Lo

47. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

My dear Klei:— 4/16/19

It is with the utmost delight that I hear of your proposed New-England trip, during which you certainly must not fail to give Providence's "hidden ways & quaint old places" a liberal share of your time. The pleasure I experienced on that memorable July 6, 1918, has not since

been equalled; & I can but look forward with eagerness to a similar delight. This time we can inspect wonders untasted last year. Whilst we then viewed some imitation Colonial architecture, we can next time behold some typical Georgian *interiors* by visiting the "Pendleton House" on Benefit Street. This house is a typical Colonial edifice, furnished magnificently with the richest Georgian furniture, as if the owner were still in possession & the calendar indeed turned back to my beloved XVIIIth century. It is in fact a museum, belonging to the Rhode Island School of Design; but the home atmosphere is sedulously maintained in order to give the visitor a faithful picture of Georgian interiors as they really were. Such a place should have power to evoke some poesy from your Muse. We might also visit my favourite rural haunt, Quinsnicket Park, which is a bit of 18th century countryside surviving to this day. It contains houses dating as far back as 1670, & bits of farmland unchanged since the reign of the third George. For scenic effects it is unsurpassed, as I tried to point out in my lines on the subject—which you probably read four years ago.

. . . . .

My mother is slightly improved in general physical condition, but not so far as nerves are concerned. Her sojourn at the sanitarium seems destined to be of long duration, & you will probably find my aunt still in domestic control here when you come. The one relieving factor is to know that my mother's condition is not one of actual danger. I have little incentive to do anything, & can appreciate, more than before, the effect of your bereavement.

I remain ever
Yr most obt Servt
Lo

48. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Prime-Minister's Chambers
6/17/19

To H. M. Rinarto I
King of the United
Sire:—

My mother's health remains so stationary that I fear present arrangements must be considered as semi-permanent. The only hopeful thing is

the assurance that she is organically well, & therefore in no danger of growing worse. It will probably be harder for her to recover from this breakdown than from that which she sustained in youth, but no physician seems to take anything but an ultimately optimistic view of the case. Nerves have always been the bane of the Phillips family!

With customary good wishes & assurances of esteem,

I am, Sir, ever yr most
obt humble Servt
Jonathan Swift

49. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

July 16, 1919

Honour'd St. John:—

THE HOUSE

'Tis a grove-circled dwelling
Set close to a hill,
Where the branches are telling
Strange legends of ill;
Over timbers so old
That they breathe of the dead,
Crawl the vines, green and cold,
By strange nourishment fed;
And no man knows the juices they suck from the depths of their dark slimy bed.

In the gardens are growing
Tall blossoms and fair,
Each pallid bloom throwing
Perfume on the air:
But the afternoon sun
With its red slanting rays
Makes the picture loom dun
On the curious gaze,
And above the sweet scent of the blossoms rise odours of numberless days.

The rank grasses are waving
On terrace and lawn,
Dim memories saving
Of things that have gone;
The stones of the walks
Are encrusted and wet,
And a strange spirit stalks
When the red sun has set,
And the soul of the watcher is fill'd with faint pictures he fain would forget.

It was in the hot Junetime
I stood by that scene,
When the gold rays of noontime
Beat bright on the green.
But I shiver'd with cold,
Groping feebly for light,
As a picture unroll'd—
And my age-spanning sight
Saw the time I had been there before flash like fulgury out of the night.

Yr Most Obt Servt
Ward Phillips

50. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

August 12, 1919

Gifted St. John:—

You may be interested to hear of the new professional literary partnership of Molo, just entered into. Mo has long been urging me to try professionalism, but I have been reluctant on account of my variation from the tastes of the period. Now, however, Mo has proposed a plan for collaboration in which his modern personality will be merged with my antique one. I am to write the material—mainly fiction—because I am the more fertile in plots; whilst he is to revise to suit the market, since he is the more familiar with contemporary conditions. He will do all the business part, also; since I detest commercialism. Then, IF he is

able to "land" anything with a remunerative magazine, we shall "go halves" on the spoils of victory.

The pseudonym under which we shall offer our composite wares for sale, is a compound of our own full names: *Horace Philter Mocraft.* This is Mo's own invention. I trust that we may be able to earn a farthing or two in this way, though I am hardly indulging in any Alnaschar's Dream of how I shall spend my vast coming wealth!!! Of course, it is understood that this arrangement shall not interfere with amateur work. I shall continue to send my matter unaltered to the amateur press, merely letting Moe have carbon copies for mutilation and marketing. The real ego Theobaldus will not bow to any reviser, and will not own or assume responsibility for the mangled "Mocraft" matter. (Possibly you know that the late George Meredith (a Liberal) wrote articles commercially for the Conservative Press—against his own doctrines!) This Mocrafty business is merely a side-line and by-product; a harmless means of turning an honest penny if possible. . . .

Your sensation of being *altered* in some subtle way is rather singular, though not incomprehensible psychologically. Such a thing might not be an inappropriate subject for introspective, meditative verse. The oddest impression I ever possess, is of the tremendously rapid rush of time—which seems to slip by me alarmingly. Events of ten or fifteen years ago seem as but yesterday, and the mere fact of being grown up is at times incredible to me, as I glance over some book particularly associated with my boyhood. At such times it is the present world which seems the more unreal and fantastic—I half expect to wake up and find the world of 1903 or thereabouts encircling me. This retrospective cast of mind, operating in various other channels, is probably what inclines me toward Graeco-Romanism and the Georgian Age.

I remain
Yr. most humble and Obt. Servant,
L. Theobald, Jun.

51. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

August 21, 1919
Sir Godfrey Kneller
London

Honourable Sir:

But I am gradually getting through with amateur journalism. What I have done for it has brought me only slights and insults, except from an intensely appreciated few to whom I shall ever be fervently grateful. I shall always cling to the Kleicomolo and Gallomo circle, and shall always be glad to help any writer who wishes me to do so; but with the organisation I am done. . . .

With best wishes, Ever yr. obt. humble Servt.,
Timon Coriolanus, Esqr.

52. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

September 14, 1919
Castle Theobald

Esteem'd but Desolated St. John:—

To begin with, let me extend the sincerest commiserations on the general state of your mind and interests, which is indeed not at all unlike my own. As you are aware, I have never been able to soothe myself with the sugary delusions of religion; for these things stand convicted of the utmost absurdity in the light of modern scientific knowledge. With Nietzsche, I have been forced to confess that mankind as a whole has no goal or purpose whatsoever, but is a mere superfluous speck in the unfathomable vortices of infinity and eternity. Accordingly, I have hardly been able to experience anything which one could call real happiness; or to take as vital an interest in human affairs as can one who still retains the hallucination of a "great purpose" in the general plan of terrestrial life. All this you know through my contributions to *The*

Kleicomolo. However, I have never permitted these circumstances to react upon my daily life; for it is obvious that although I have "nothing to live for", I certainly have just as much as any other of the insignificant bacteria called human beings. I have thus been content to observe the phenomena about me with something like objective interest, and to feel a certain tranquillity which comes from perfect acceptance of my place as an inconsequential atom. In ceasing to care about most things, I have likewise ceased to suffer in many ways. There is a real restfulness in the scientific conviction that nothing matters very much; that the only legitimate aim of humanity is to minimise acute suffering for the majority, and to derive whatever satisfaction is derivable from the exercise of the mind in the pursuit of truth.

If I were to criticise your present philosophy, it would be that you demand too much *emotion*—which is, after all, a distinctly inferior form of psychic activity. It may, of course, be pleasant and desirable in a way, but it involves the play of nervous tissue far less evolved than that wherein true intellection resides. It is a link with the instinct of lower creation, and consequently is not to be fostered or encouraged as a supreme goal of human endeavour. What man should seek, is the pleasure of non-emotional imagination—the pleasure of pure reason, as found in the perception of truths. It will always be more or less accompanied by secondary or vestigial emotional phenomena, but these phenomena will be of a rarefied type dependent on reason and imagination. Now that poetry no longer enchants you, I should advise your choice of philosophy as a substitute. Having failed to derive satisfaction from contemplating yourself as a highly organised centre of impressions and sensations, try contemplating yourself as a speck of dust in the midst of infinite creation, whose depths hold vast secrets for your solution. There is excitement and life in the thought. In place of Lamb, Keats, Shelley, or Tennyson, try Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and Haeckel. Be a scientist instead of a litterateur.

Utter happiness, in the romantic sense, is in most cases an unattainable impossibility. Remember that the goal of the great Epicurus was not an earthy ἡδονή, (Hedonism), or pleasure, but a lofty ἀταραχία, (Ataraxia), or freedom from cares and trivial thoughts. Consider yourself an impersonal observer without emotions, and have as your aim in life the tranquil observation and classification of the facts about you. I am sure that I, who hardly know what an emotion is like

(outside of a few bursts of honest *anger* once in a while!), am far less vexed than he who is constantly straining after new sensations. . . .

H. Paget Lowe
(my latest pseudonym)

53. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Angell-St.
East of Ye Great Bridge, in Providence
27th Septr., N. S. 1919

Laurell'd Bard:—

Returning to the subject of Grove Street melancholy and matrimony—I concede the logick and desirability of your present course. A year or two's wait before the ceremony is to be understood—I took all that for granted when speaking of an "immediate" union. Of course, I am unfamiliar with amatory phenomena save through cursory reading. I always assumed that one waited till he encountered some nymph who seemed radically different to him from the rest of her sex, and without whom he felt he could no longer exist. Then, I fancied, he commenced to lay siege to her heart in businesslike fashion, not desisting till either he won her for life, or was blighted by rejection. Of seeking affection for affection's sake—without any one special fair creature in mind—I was quite ignorant! Pardon, I pray you, the dulness of one but imperfectly instructed in the details of Paphian emotion.

I have never perused the epistles of M. Mérimée, nor indeed, anything else of that gentilhomme's! My reading of publish'd letters hath largely been confined to those of 18th century British authors, and of Romans such as M. Tullius Cicero, T. Pomponius Atticus, and C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus. I agree that epistles have much interest, those of Mr. Cowper being perhaps the most interesting of all. However, I can hardly agree that those pertaining to the fair are especially or even ordinarily entertaining. The whole subject of the fair is so over-worked and done to death by authors great and small, that to me it seems somewhat trite and boresome. Anything else is a relief! Yet as you say, or rather, as you quote, the influence of females upon the superficial conventions of society is perhaps not inconsiderable. I probably underestimate it, since my poor health has ever kept me within a home wherein my mother and aunts have wielded influence. . . .

As to that dream of mine—it is but one of countless nocturnal fantasies which I experience. Only its coherence and continuity are unusual. I am forever dreaming of strange barren landscapes, cliffs, stretches of ocean, and deserted cities with towers and domes. In the *Kleicomolo* I am relating a dream of gruesome nature, induced by a reading of some of Ambrose Bierce's horror stories. I shall also repeat my abyss dream in the K.—if you will pardon the repetition. I want Comogal to hear it. All this dreaming comes without the stimulus of *cannabis indica*. Should I take that drug, who can say what worlds of unreality I might explore?

I beg to subscribe my self ever
Yr. most obt. humble Servt.
H. Paget Lowe

54. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, & MOE)

Providence, R.I.
Tuesday, September 30, 1919

. . . . . I formerly attended the cinema quite frequently, but it is beginning to bore me. My interest lay more in the plays than the players, and I have no especial enthusiasm for any of the artists of the shadow. If I have ever singled out any stars above the rest, it has been a pair about whom one hears relatively little—Henry B. Walthall and the Japanese Sessue Hayakawa. The latter was my late young cousin's favourite. Walthall possesses tragical potentialities all too seldom utilised on the screen. His part in the *Birth of a Nation*, though a leading one, failed to do him justice. He could create a sensation if some of Poe's tales were dramatised—I can imagine him as Roderick Usher or the central character in *Berenice*. No one else in filmland can duplicate his delineation of stark, hideous terror or fiendish malignancy. Hayakawa excels in tragical pathos, and would soar high if he were a white man. I would not be surprised if he had a dash of white blood somewhere. Both Walthall and Hayakawa are too good for films— they ought to be known more widely.

. . . . . Orientals must be kept in their native East till the fall of the white race. Sooner or later a great Japanese war will take place, during which I think the virtual destruction of Japan will have to be effected in the interests of European safety. The more numerous Chinese are a menace of the still more distant future. They will probably be the exterminators of Caucasian civilisation, for their numbers are amazing. But all that is too far ahead for consideration today. . . .

I am, Gents, yr. obt. &c
M. LOLLIVS

55. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

October 14, 1919

Admirable St. John:—

I celebrated Columbus Day by one of my cherished solitary rambles through the agrestic recesses of Quinsnicket Park. The day was as delightful as October can produce, and I had the most congenial of companions—a pocket telescope, and a century-old copy of Thomson's *Seasons*—which Alfredus despises so bitterly. As is my custom, I read those parts which possessed a particular bearing on the season—including the episode of Lavinia, where Mr. Pope inserted several lines of his own when criticising Thomson's rough MS. The time was late afternoon, and it was delightful to penetrate the primeval country after leaving behind the alienised suburbs where reigns Hebrew, Italian, and French-Canadian squalor. As I mounted the slope which leads to the most delightful portion of the forest, the sun was cut off from me, and was visible shining on the plains and villages below in such a manner that the scene suggested a beautiful picture rather than actual landskip. As I bade farewell to the meadows at set of sun, I regretted the absence of my camera; for truly, few sights are more lovely than that of the harvest fields by twilight, walls, hedges, stubble, sheaves, and all, blending into a delicious whole. Verily, I cannot comprehend the psychology of a town poet who can fail to succumb to the spell! And as if to complete the enchantment, I heard the mellow voices of distant swains in simple melody. True, they were probably town youths on an

outing; but I preferred to think of them as the scions of that contented peasantry of old, who happy stirr'd the glebe.

Yr. most Obt. humble Servt.,
H. Paget Lowe

56. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Same Old Address
November 9, 1919

Lothario Chimney, Esqr. / Brooklyn, in New-York / Philandering and Nicotinical Sir:—

Anent tobacco—I fancy you will be tired of it ere long. Lest you assign to me an excess of credit for conscious asceticism, let me say that perhaps the chief factor in my abstinence from the beguiling weed is that I detest the d—d stuff most cordially! Its fumes are disgusting to me, hence though I smoked when about twelve years old—just to seem like a grown man—I left off as soon as I acquired long trousers; which formed a substitute symbol of independent adulthood. I cannot see yet what anyone finds attractive about the habit of imitating a smokestack! . . .

. . . . . At 7:00 a party consisting of Miss H., her aunt, young Lee, and I. Theobald set out for the great event. Arriving early at the Copley-Plaza, we obtained front seats; so that during the address I sat directly opposite the speaker, not ten feet from him. Dunsany entered late, accompanied and introduced by Prof. George Baker of Harvard. He is of Galpinian build—6 ft. 2 in. in height, and very slender. His face is fair and pleasing, though marred by a slight moustache. In manner he is boyish and a trifle awkward; and his smile is winning and infectious. His hair is light brown. His voice is mellow and cultivated, and very clearly British. He pronounces *were* as *wair*, etc. Dunsany first touched upon his ideals and methods; then hitched a chair up to his reading table, seated himself, crossed his long legs, and commenced reading his short play, *The Queen's Enemies*. This is based very obviously upon the anecdote of Nitocris in the second book of Herodotus; but Dunsany averred that he had purposely avoided reading details or even learning the names of the characters in the story, for fear his orig-

inal imaginative work on the play might be hampered or impaired. I advise you to read it for yourself—it is in *Plays of Gods and Men*, which every well-regulated library has or ought to have on the shelves. Later Dunsany read selections from other works of his, including a masterly burlesque on his own style—*Why the Milkman Shudders when he Sees the Dawn*. As he read this, he could not repress his own smiles and incipient chuckles! The audience was large, select, and appreciative; and after the lecture Dunsany was encircled by autograph-seekers. Egged on by her aunt, Miss Hamlet almost mustered up courage enough to ask for an autograph, but weakened at the last moment. Of this more anon. For mine own part, I did not seek a signature; for I detest fawning upon the great. Dunsany himself has written a piece (*Fame and the Poet*, in the August *Atlantic*) which shews his contempt for the flatterers of genius. To some of those with whom he shook hands, Dunsany remarked that he had a severe headache. I could sympathise; for although I had stood the day of unusual exertion remarkably well, my poor cranium was pounding and reeling most lamentably—the pain having begun about half way through the lecture. Still, I was able to keep up and navigate my course through the maze of now disarranged chairs in the vast ballroom where the address was delivered. We saw Dunsany enter his cab and drive off; then repaired to the nearest white post for my South Stationward car. . . . Altogether it was a most remarkable and highly enjoyable experience for me in these latter days of valetudinarian retirement. I had not been in Boston before since Jan. 1916—and not in Cambridge since 1910. To see and hear a favourite author is something rare indeed for one whose favourites lie so largely in the past! With you, Mocrates, and little Galpinius there, my pleasure would have been compleat!

The one sequel to the lecture does not concern me, but deserves narration (an unconsciously egotistical sentence!). Miss H. could not quite give up the idea of an autograph, so on the following day wrote a letter to Dunsany, enclosing several tokens of esteem for him and for his wife; the greatest of which was a genuine autograph letter of Abraham Lincoln. Soon afterward she received a most courteous reply from His Lordship, written personally with his celebreated *quill*, and containing a pleasant enclosed note from Lady Dunsany! Of this letter from so great an author, Miss H. is justly proud in the extreme; and she will

doubtless retain it as a treasure of priceless worth. I will here present a verbatim transcription!

"My dear Miss Hamlet:—

Thank you very much for your kind letter and present, and for the charming little presents to my wife. I had not seen the Lincoln Letter before, and I am very glad to have it. It is a stately letter, and above all, it is full of human kindness; and I doubt if any of us by any means can achieve anything better than that.

With many thanks,

Yours very sincerely,

Dunsany

P.S. I'll write plenty more for you."

Yr. most oblig'd Obt. Servt.

Humphry Littlewit, Gent.

57. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Twickenham

3rd Decr., 1919

My dear Kleiner:—

As you infer, *The White Ship* is in part influenced by my new Dunsanian studies. There are many highly effective points in Dunsany's style, and any writer of imaginative prose will be the better for having read him. . . . Today I go down to obtain the very latest Dunsany book—just published—*Unhappy Far-Off Things*, which I first saw advertised in the November *Atlantic*. Recently I read *Time and the Gods*, which is not only highly interesting but richly philosophical. You surely must read Dunsany—in places his work is pure poetry despite the prose medium. If anyone can restore the old literary Kleiner it is this same Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett! . . .

I am glad to say that during the past two months my mother's health has shewn a more decided improvement than at any other time since her breakdown in January. She will not, however, be strong enough to return home for a very long time. . . .

With sincere assurances of profound esteem and unvarying regard,
I am, Sir,
Ever yr. most humble, most obedient Servt.
Horace Walpole.

58. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, & MOE)

Providence, R.I.
December 11, 1919

Before quitting the subject of Loveman and horror stories, I must relate the frightful dream I had the night after I received S. L.'s latest letter. We have lately been discussing weird tales at length, and he has recommended several hair-raising books to me; so that I was in the mood to connect him with any thought of hideousness or supernatural terror. I do not recall how this dream began, or what it was really all about. There remains in my mind only one damnably blood-curdling fragment whose ending haunts me yet.

We were, for some terrible yet unknown reason, in a very strange and very ancient cemetery—which I could not identify. I suppose no Wisconsinite can picture such a thing—but we have them in New-England; horrible old places where the slate stones are graven with odd letters and grotesque designs such as a skull and crossbones. In some of these places one can walk a long way without coming upon any grave less than an hundred and fifty years old. Some day, when Cook issues that promised *Monadnock*, you will see my tale *The Tomb*, which was inspired by one of these places. Such was the scene of my dream—a hideous hollow whose surface was covered with a coarse, repulsive sort of long grass, above which peeped the shocking stones and markers of decaying slate. In a hillside were several tombs whose facades were in the last stages of decrepitude. I had an odd idea that no living thing had trodden that ground for many centuries till Loveman and I arrived. It was very late in the night—probably in the small hours, since a waning crescent moon had attained considerable height in the east. Loveman carried, slung over his shoulder, a portable telephone outfit; whilst I bore two spades. We proceeded directly to a flat sepulchre near the centre of the horrible place, and began to clear away

the moss-grown earth which had been washed down upon it by the rains of innumerable years. Loveman, in the dream, looked exactly like the snap-shots of himself which he has sent me—a large, robust young man, not the least Semitic in features (albeit dark), and very handsome save for a pair of protruding ears. We did not speak as he laid down his telephone outfit, took a shovel, and helped me clear away the earth and weeds. We both seemed very much impressed with something —almost awestruck. At last we completed these preliminaries, and Loveman stepped back to survey the sepulchre. He seemed to know exactly what he was about to do, and I also had an idea—though I cannot now remember what it was! All that I recall is that we were following up some idea which Loveman had gained as the result of extensive reading in some rare old books, of which he possessed the only existing copies. (Loveman, you may know, has a vast library of rare first editions and other treasures precious to the bibliophile's heart.) After some mental estimates, Loveman took up his shovel again, and using it as a lever, sought to pry up a certain slab which formed the top of the sepulchre. He did not succeed, so I approached and helped him with my own shovel. Finally we loosened the stone, lifted it with our combined strength, and heaved it away. Beneath was a black passageway with a flight of stone steps; but so horrible were the miasmic vapours which poured up from the pit, that we stepped back for a while without making further observations. Then Loveman picked up the telephone outfit and began to uncoil the wire— speaking for the first time as he did so.

"I'm really sorry," he said in a mellow, pleasant voice; cultivated, and not very deep, "to have to ask you to stay above ground, but I couldn't answer for the consequences if you were to go down with me. Honestly, I doubt if anyone with a nervous system like yours could see it through. You can't imagine what I shall have to see and do—not even from what the book said and from what I have told you—and I don't think anyone without ironclad nerves could ever go down and come out of that place alive and sane. At any rate, this is no place for anybody who can't pass an army physical examination. I discovered this thing, and I am responsible in a way for anyone who goes with me—so I would not for a thousand dollars let you take the risk. But I'll keep you informed of every move I make by the telephone—you see I've enough wire here to reach to the center of the earth and back!"

I argued with him, but he replied that if I did not agree, he would call the thing off and get another fellow-explorer—he mentioned a "Dr. Burke," a name altogether unfamiliar to me. He added, that it would be of no use for me to descend alone, since he was sole possessor of the real key to the affair. Finally I assented, and seated myself upon a marble bench close by the open grave, telephone in hand. He produced an electric lantern, prepared the telephone wire for unreeling, and disappeared down the damp stone steps, the insulated wire rustling as it uncoiled. For a moment I kept track of the glow of his lantern, but suddenly it faded out, as if there were a turn in the stone staircase. Then all was still. After this came a period of dull fear and anxious waiting. The crescent moon climbed higher, and the mist or fog about the hollow seemed to thicken. Everything was horribly damp and bedewed, and I thought I saw an owl flitting somewhere in the shadows. Then a clicking sounded in the telephone receiver.

"Lovecraft—I think I'm finding it"—the words came in a tense, excited tone. Then a brief pause, followed by more words in a tone of ineffable awe and horror.

"God, Lovecraft! *If you could see what I am seeing!*" I now asked in great excitement what had happened. Loveman answered in a trembling voice:

"I can't tell you—I don't dare—I never dreamed of *this*—I can't tell —It's enough to unseat any mind——wait——What's this?" Then a pause, a clicking in the receiver, and a sort of despairing groan. Speech again—

"Lovecraft—for God's sake—it's all up—Beat it! *Beat it!* Don't lose a second!" I was now thoroughly alarmed, and frantically asked Loveman to tell what the matter was. He replied only "Never mind! Hurry!" Then I felt a sort of offence through my fear—it irked me that anyone should assume I would be willing to desert a companion in peril. I disregarded his advice and told him I was coming down to his aid. But he cried.

"Don't be a fool—it's too late—there's no use—nothing you or anyone can do now." He seemed calmer—with a terrible, resigned calm, as if he had met and recognised an inevitable, inescapable doom. Yet he was obviously anxious that I should escape some unknown peril.

"For God's sake get out of this, if you can find the way! I'm not joking—So long, Lovecraft, won't see you again—God! Beat it! *Beat it!*" As he shrieked out the last words, his tone was a frenzied crescendo. I have tried to recall the wording as nearly as possible, but I cannot reproduce the tone. There followed a long—hideously long—period of silence. I tried to move to assist Loveman, but was absolutely paralysed. The slightest motion was an impossibility. I could speak, however, and kept calling excitedly into the telephone—"Loveman! Loveman! What is it? What's the trouble?" But he did not reply. And then came the unbelievably frightful thing—the awful, unexplainable, almost unmentionable thing. I have said that Loveman was now silent, but after a vast interval of terrified waiting another clicking came into the receiver. I called "Loveman—are you there?" And in reply came a *voice*—a thing which I cannot describe by any words I know. Shall I say that it was hollow—very deep—fluid—gelatinous—infinitely distant—unearthly—guttural—thick? What shall I say? In that telephone I heard it; heard it as I sat on a marble bench in that very ancient unknown cemetery with the crumbling stones and tombs and long grass and dampness and the owl and the waning crescent moon. Up from the sepulchre it came, and this is what it said:

"YOU FOOL, LOVEMAN IS DEAD!"

Well, that's the whole damn thing! I fainted in the dream, and the next I knew I was awake—and with a prize headache! I don't know yet what it was all about—what on (or under) earth we were looking for, or what that hideous voice at the last was supposed to be. I have read of ghouls—mould shades—but hell—the headache I had was worse than the dream! Loveman will laugh when I tell him about that dream! In due time, I intend to weave this picture into a story, as I wove another dream-picture into *The Doom that Came to Sarnath*. I wonder, though, if I have a right to claim authorship of things I dream? I hate to take credit, when I did not really think out the picture with my own conscious wits. Yet if I do not take credit, who'n Heaven will I give credit tuh? Coleridge claimed *Kubla Khan*, so I guess I'll claim the thing an' let it go at that. But believe muh, that was *some* dream!!

Well, God rest you, Merry Gentlemen, may nothing you dismay.

Your affectionate Grandfather,

M. LOLLIVS. TIBALDVS

59. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

The Mitre Tavern
27 Decr., 1719

Esteem'd St. John:—

. . . . . The whole affair is one of vast singularity and mystery, and in my hands the tale would have become a horror story with a very different sort of climax. I should have had the lady display odd flashes of knowledge of the immemorial past, coupled with a certain mingled horror and contempt of old age. I should have had her shew, on the occasion of a trip through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a curious fear when confronted with a particular inscription on an Egyptian stone. Then I should have had a friend of yours from Paris—let us call him M. Duval—meet her, and start back in fright—never quite daring to explain his fear, but afterward muttering to you that she queerly resembled a miniature which his great-great grandfather had worn in a locket, and which was connected with a peculiar family legend not pleasant to describe. And then I should have had you notice one morning before your mirror, that you were *aging* alarmingly and inexplicably—that your face, a few months before that of a youth, was now as that of a man of forty. You spoke of this to her, and her laugh sent a chill down your spine—and you noticed that she seemed younger than when you had first known her. Then you friend from Paris noticed the change in you and in her—and would often become very thoughtful. He sent to his ancestral chateau in Vancluse for some documents—relating to some family financial arrangement, he told you, when one day you surprised him in the midst of the yellowed papers. And then you began to suspect that he was in the habit of following you and the lady—you even feared he would try to trace her to her home. One day the lady disappeared, and shortly afterward your friend returned to France. Then, three months later, you bought a copy of *The Wandering Jew* in Ann Street, and found on the newspaper wrapping the following item; three months old:

Mystery in East Side Lodging
Police baffled by events in room at 136 East 25th Street.

3/31/20

Avian Bolingbroke! —

I owe 17 letters besides this one to you, some of them dating back to February. I am also under pressure to write an article for good old Smithy's Tryout. And yet through my constitutional perversity I choose to do the pleasant rather than the dutiful thing — wherefore my prompt reply to yours of the 24th, with obvious disregard of the chronological system I usually maintain in my correspondence.

H: Poe Lovecraft, 1840

But when all things are consider'd, I fancy that my breach of schedule will be decm'd pardonable; for I am at such a nervous tension that none but voluntary & interesting correspondence could possibly be expected of me. Whence, you ask, the tension? Naval reply — D.V. Bush! He has been of late bombarding me most shamelessly albeit lucratively. My purse hath swollen whilst my head hath reel'd. — pardon the involuntary heroick — but as you know, I used to be a versifier. Day before yesterday things came to a climax. I had been unusually wretched — two Bush orders on top of each other had reduced me to despair, & Sunday evening I had fallen asleep in my chair, not awaking till 4 a.m. When the postman came Monday, I was about ready to "lay me down & die" for good — but what should I find but another Bush order — The largest in history. The poor devil was in a woeful quandary. He has acquired the name of a poet in his home town by not shewing any save his revised verses; but at the same time he has been careful to let his friends know that he is the author of real books of poetry. You remember the blue-bound tracts I shew'd you. Last week, on the strength of his reputation as a bard, Bush was invited to speak before some club

SPECIMEN PAGES OF LOVECRAFT LETTERS

United Activity;
or, why ye Conservative doth
not always answer his Letters
with Promptness.

31st Mch 1716

598 Angell-St
Providence, in
New-England

R. Kleiner Esq.,
Most esteem'd Sir:

'Twas ye custom of primitive Mankind, before Cadmus did invent ye art of Writing, to express Theyght in Pictures, a Practice which still existeth amongst savage Tribes. Though I be neither of ye Times before Cadmus, nor yet, I do trust, a Savage; I will none ye less use a Picture to shew you a Condition that hath kept me long from

Police today are on the watch for a young woman, old woman, and young man, believed to have knowledge of a skeleton found last night in the young woman's apartment at 136 East 25th Street. The young woman, known as Miriam Smith, engaged the room two years ago; and is believed to have been a clerk or saleswoman. She is described as dark, comely, and somewhat sad in appearance, usually dressed in black and wearing a silver crucifix. She suffered from some obscure ailment, evidently of the heart, but had recently appeared in strangely better health, and much younger in aspect than before. The old woman and young man are not known in the locality.

Last night at about 11 o'clock Miss Smith was seen to enter her apartment, a light immediately appearing at her window. Five minutes later a handsome and well-dressed young man followed her into the building. Tenants report loud voices in the Smith apartment, followed by a series of screams too shocking to describe; and Mr. Isidor Fitzpatrick, who lives across the street, claims to have seen at the window an aged woman with streaming white hair, waving her arms in a frantic manner. Immediately afterward the young man left the house in great haste and was seen to walk swiftly in the direction of Madison Square. Moans proceeding from the Smith room caused an investigation on the part of Patrick J. Cohen, the landlord, who after failing to obtain a response to his knocking, had the door broken down by Officer McGoldstein of the —th Precinct. At first the investigators were overpowered by the hideous stench that emanated from the room, but later they entered and discovered on the floor a skeleton, seemingly of great age, since the bones crumbled to powder at the touch of the patrolman's club. Of the young woman no trace was found, though she was not seen to leave the apartment. Of the old woman seen by Mr. Fitzpatrick, nothing further was seen or heard. The skeleton bore no distinguishing mark, but is thought to have been that of a woman. One hand, seemingly raised to the throat, held in its grasp a silver curcifix.

Pardon my flight of fancy—but mysteries always arouse my imagination. It seems too bad to let them pass without providing material for a tale of the grotesque or arabesque. I fear if I were to try to become a lady's man like you, I should offend all my charmers at the very outset by weaving them into weird and horrible tales! But fortunately horror-writers are not often ladies' men—notwithstanding Mr. Poe's fondness for the fair.

I have just finished a ghastly tale entitled *The Statement of Randolph Carter*, based on an actual dream of mine, in which the amateur Samuel Loveman was the central figure. Loveman and I have been discussing literary horrors at length, and he has been kind enough to recommend to me several volumes of weird and bizarre prose and verse; so that it is hardly remarkable that I should dream of him in this way.

Accept, Sir, the usual assurances etc., from
Yr. Obt. hble. Servt.
H. Paget Lowe

60. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, AND MOE)

1920

Speaking of the "Carter" story, I have lately had another odd dream—especially singular because in it I possessed another personality—a personality just as definite and vivid as the Lovecraft personality which characterises my waking hours.

My name was Dr. Eben Spencer, and I was dressing before a mirror in my own room, in the house where I was born, in a small village (name missing) of northern New York State. It was the first time I had donned civilian clothes in three years, for I was an army surgeon with the rank of 1st Lieut. I seemed to be home on a furlough—slightly wounded. On the wall was a calendar reading "FRIDAY, JULY 8, 1864". I was very glad to be in regular attire again, though my suit was not a new one, but one left over from 1861. After carefully tying my stock, I donned my coat and hat, took a cane from a rack downstairs, and sallied forth upon the village street. Soon a very young man of my acquaintance came up to me with an air of anxiety and began to speak in guarded accents. He wished me to go with him to his brother—my professional colleague Dr. Chester—whose actions were greatly alarming him. I, having been his best friend, might have some influence in getting him to speak freely—for surely he had much to tell. The doctor had for the past two years been conducting secret experiments in a laboratory in the attic of his home, and beyond that

locked door he would admit no one but himself. Sickening odours were often detected near that door . . . and odd sounds were at times not absent. The doctor was aging rapidly; lines of care—and of something else—were creeping into his dark, thin face, and his hair was rapidly going grey. He would remain in that locked room for dangerously long intervals without food, and seemed uncannily saturnine. All questioning from the younger brother was met with scorn or rage—with perhaps a little uneasiness; so the brother was much worried, and stopped me on the street for advice and aid. I went with him to the Chester house—a white structure of two stories and attic in a pretty yard with a picket fence. It was in a quiet side street, where peace seemed to abide despite the trying nature of the times. In the darkened parlour, where I waited for some time, was a marble-topped table, much haircloth furniture, and several pleasing whatnots covered with pebbles, curios, and bric-a-brac. Soon Dr. Chester came down—and *he had aged*. He greeted me with a saturnine smile, and I began to question him, as tactfully as I could, about his strange actions. At first he was rather defiant and insulting—he said with a sort of leer, "Better not ask, Spencer! Better not ask!" Then when I grew persistent (for by this time I was interested on my own account) he changed abruptly and snapped out, "Well, if you must know, come up!" Up two flights of stairs we plodded, and stood before the locked door. Dr. Chester opened it, *and there was an odour*. I entered after him, young Chester bringing up the rear. The room was low but spacious in area, and had been divided into two parts by an oddly incongruous red plush portiere. In the half next the door was a dissecting table, many bookcases, and several imposing cabinets of chemical and surgical instruments. Young Chester and I remained here, whilst the doctor went behind the curtain. Soon he emerged, bearing on a large glass slab what appeared to be a human arm, neatly severed just below the elbow. It was damp, gelatinous, and bluish-white, and the fingers were without nails. "Well, Spencer," said Dr. Chester sneeringly, "I suppose you've had a good deal of amputation practice in the army. What do you think, professionally, of this job?" I had seen clearly that this was not a human arm, and said sarcastically, "You are a better sculptor than doctor, Chester. This is not the arm of any living thing." And Chester replied in a tone that made my blood congeal *"Not yet, Spencer, not*

yet!" Then he disappeared again behind the portiere and emerged once more, bringing another and slightly larger arm. Both were left arms. I felt sure that I was on the brink of a great revelation, and awaited with impatience the tantalisingly deliberate motions of my sinister colleague. "This is only the beginning, Spencer," he said as he went behind the curtain for a third time. "*Watch the curtain!*" And now ends the fictionally available part of my dream, for the residue is grotesque anti-climax. I have said that I was in civilian clothes for the first time since '61—and naturally I was rather self-conscious. As I waited for the final revelation I caught sight of my reflection in the glass door of an instrument case, and discovered that my very carefully tied stock was awry. Moving to a long mirror, I sought to adjust it, but the black bow proved hard to fashion artistically. And then the whole scene began to fade—and damn the luck! I awaked in the distressful year of 1920, with the personality of H. P. Lovecraft restored! I have never seen Dr. Chester, or his young brother, or that village, since. I do not know what village it was. I never heard the name of Eben Spencer before or since. Some dream! If that happened to Co, he would be duly seeking a supernatural explanation; but I prefer actual analysis. The cause of the whole is clear—I had a few days before laid out Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein* for re-reading. As to details—Ambrose Bierce supplied the Civil War atmosphere, no doubt; whilst it is easy to trace in Dr. *Chester* and his brother—facially, I mean—the likenesses of my boyhood friends *Chester* and Harold Munroe; those brothers of whom I spoke in one of my ancient KLEICOMOLOES. I am not sleeping much this week, but last night I had a promising fragment of a dream that was cut short by premature awakening. I was alone in a black space, when suddenly, ahead of me, there arose out of some hidden pit a huge, white-robed man with a bald head and snowy beard. Across his shoulders was slung the corpse of a younger man—cleanshaven, and grizzled of hair, and clad in a similar robe. A sound as of rushing wind or a roaring furnace accompanied this spectacular ascent—an ascent which seemed accomplished by some occult species of levitation. When I awaked, I had an idea for a story—but queerly enough, the idea had nothing to do with the dream!

. . . . . Critics, expecting so much, sadly exaggerate the awkwardness of Dunsany. In absolute fact, he is a very tall, thin man with just a touch of awkwardness—and it is an engaging, boyish sort of awkward-

ness which does not offend the eye at all. His voice is *not* of the "mush-in-the-mouth" sort, but is merely a bit mellow and throaty after the British pattern, rather than thin and nasal after the Yankee style. Perhaps there is a slight lisp, but it appears only at rare intervals. Obviously he has been at pains to correct it. The only trouble with Dunsany as a public speaker is that he makes no pretence of *stage presence.* As a successful dramatist, one expects him to have a bit of the actor about him, but he is essentially of a non-dramatic type. His striving for dramatic effect is an intellectual one—exercised when he *writes,* not when he *reads* his plays. He addresses his audience not as a performer declaiming to a crowded pit, but as a gentleman entertaining friends in his own drawing-room. He is at home with his audience—he mingles with them in spirit, as it were, and is not conscious of the platform and the gulf it is supposed to create between reader and auditor. He makes no effort at bodily pose—he is merely himself. Accordingly he seats himself and crosses his long legs when he chooses, and occasionally resorts to the water-pitcher. But he does not do this in an absurd or ungraceful way. There is not a trace of the clown in his acts. As to that "dumping a pitcher of ice water over his head"—I rebel at the callous remark of a half-baked reporter who probably knows nothing of headaches. When he lectured in Boston I heard him remark after the address, in speaking to a friend, "I have a fearful headache." Now I know *all* about headaches. All there is to be known. Some of mine seem impossible to live through. And I know that if Edward J. M. D. Plunkett's are anything like mine, he *must* put water to his head when they are near their climax. He did not do so the night I saw him—in fact, he did not even rub his brow until after he had descended from the platform. But it takes no great amount of deduction to infer that in Chicago he was more sharply afflicted whilst on the platform. Instead of descending, he stuck it out like a stoic to please his audience—and in return a writer jests about his antics with the water-pitcher! I am eloquent about headaches tonight, because I have just emerged from a veritable "killer", contracted by working half the forenoon and all the afternoon on Bush junk. *I* have been using water on my forehead, and I give not a river-regular on what any critick or reporter says of me!

I wonder that some of these journalists do not speak of Dunsany's face and expression—but they are obviously concerned only with things about which they can find fault. Dunsany is really handsome, and has

one of the most kindly, winning, wholesome expressions I have ever beheld. Whether serious or whimsically humorous, his blue eyes are alight with an indefinable quality which makes one sure that he is a very good and very generous man. Dunsany left in my mind an exceedingly favourable impression—an impression which made me wish that he were a personal friend of mine. He is, I think, a trifle *unworldly* —if such may be said of a man who has travelled all over the globe and served through two wars.

. . . . . When I was very small, my kingdom was the lot next my birthplace, 454 Angell St. Here were trees, shrubs, and grasses, and here when I was between four and five the coachman built me an immense summer-house all mine own—a somewhat crude yet vastly pleasing affair, with a staircase leading to a flat roof from which in later years I surveyed the skies with my telescope. The floor was Mother Earth herself, for at the time the edifice was constructed I had a definite purpose for it. I was then a railway man, with a vast system of express-carts, wheel barrows, and the like; plus some immensely ingenious cars made out of packing-cases. I had also a splendid engine made by mounting a sort of queer boiler on a tiny express-waggon. The new building, therefore, must needs be my grand terminal and roundhouse combined; a mighty shed under which my puffing trains could run, even as the big trains of the outside world ran under the sheds at the old depots in Providence and Boston—depots long since razed to the ground to make way for the Union, Back Bay, and South Stations of today! So the building became in familiar household parlance "The Engine House" —and how I loved it! From the gate of our yard to the Engine House I had a nice track—or path—made and levelled for me; a continuation of the great railway system formed by the concrete walks in the yard. And here, in supreme bliss, were idled away the days of my youth. As I grew older, I took the road and its buildings more and more under my personal management. I began to make repairs myself, and when I was six I constructed many branch lines. Once I carefully laid a track with wooden rails and sleepers—forgetting the trivial detail that I had nothing to run on it! But it looked nice, anyway! Then came changes—one day there was not any coachman to help me, whereat I mourned; but later on I had compensation—the horses and carriages were sold too, so that I had a gorgeous, glorious, titanic, and unbelievable new playhouse—the whole great stable with its immense carriage room, its neat-looking "office", and its vast upstairs, with the colossal (almost scareful) expanse of the grain loft, and the little three-room apartment where the coachman and his wife had lived. All this magnificence was my very own, to do with as I liked! Many were the uses to which I put that stable. The carriage room was now the main terminal of my railway, whilst in other parts were my office, theatre, and other institutions. But the call of the pastoral could not be resisted! Despite my new possession, my interest in the vacant lot and the Engine House was unflagging. One day I decided to alter my scheme, and instead of a railway system my domain became a pastoral countryside. I invited all the boys of the neighbourhood to co-operate in building a little village under the lee of the high board fence, which was in due time accomplished. Many new roads and garden spots were made, and the whole was protected from the Indians (who dwelt somewhere to the north) by a large and impregnable fort with massive earthworks. The boy who suggested that fort and supervised its construction was deeply interested in military things and followed up his hobby. Today he is a Lieutenant-Colonel in the U. S. Army, having attended West Point and served brilliantly as Captain and Major through the World War, being twice wounded. My new village was called "New Anvik", after the Alaskan village of "Anvik", which about that time became know to me through the boys' book *Snow-Shoes and Sledges*, by Kirk Munroe. As you see, I then read juvenile matter as well as the classics, and liked it! As the years stole on, my play became more and more dignified; but I could not give up New Anvik. When the grand disaster came, and we moved to this inferior abode, I made a second and more ambitious New Anvik in the vacant lot here. This was my aesthetic masterpiece, for besides a little village of painted huts erected by myself and Chester and Harold Munroe, there was a landscape garden, all of mine own handiwork. I chopped down certain trees and preserved others, laid out paths and gardens, and set at the proper points shrubbery and ornamental urns taken from the old home. My paths were of gravel, bordered with stones, and here and there a bit of stone wall or an impressive cairn of my own making added to the picture Between two trees I made a rustic bench, later duplicating it betwixt two other trees. A large grassy space I levelled and transformed into a Georgian lawn, with a sundial in the centre. Other parts were uneven, and I sought to catch certain sylvan or bower-like effects. The whole was drained by a system of channels terminating in a cess-pool of my own excavation. Such was the paradise of my adolescent years, and

amidst such scenes were many of my early works written. Though by nature indolent, I was never too tired to labour about my estate, attending to the vegetation in summer, and shovelling neat paths in niveous winter. Then I perceived with horror that I was growing too old for pleasure. Ruthless Time had set its fell claw upon me, and I was seventeen. Big boys do not play in toy houses and mock gardens, so I was obliged to turn over my world in sorrow to another and younger boy who dwelt across the lot from me. And since that time I have not delved in the earth or laid out paths and roads. There is too much wistful memory in such procedure, for the fleeting joy of childhood may never be recaptured. Adulthood is hell.

Valete—
LO.

61. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Home—as usual
January 23, 1920

Noble Don Juan:—

I have been wondering lately if I could ever manage, under the pressure of poverty, to accept a position in an *evening* school. A day school, of course, would be out of the question—for I can rarely keep up that long for two successive days. If fairly frequent absences could be pardoned, I might manage to keep up with the evening hours—but fancy my trying to hold in check a roomful of incipient gangsters! It seems as though every avenue of renumerative activity is closed to a total nervous wreck!

. . . . . I have lately—by the way—been collecting ideas and images for subsequent use in fiction. For the first time in my life, I am keeping a "commonplace-book"—if that term can be applied to a repository of gruesome and fantastick thoughts. . . .

. . . . . Eroticism belongs to a lower order of instincts, and is an animal rather than nobly human quality. For evolved man—the apex of organic progress on the earth—what branch of reflection is more fitting than that which occupies only his higher and exclusively human faculties? The primal savage or ape merely looks about his native forest to find a mate; the exalted Aryan should lift his eyes to the worlds of space and consider his relation to infinity!! . . . Really, I

suppose my opinion is determined by the much simpler fact that I chance to have vastly more imagination than emotion. About romance and affection I never have felt the slightest interest; whereas the sky, with its tale of eternities past and to come, and its gorgeous panoply of whirling universes, has always held me enthralled. And in truth, is this not the natural attitude of an analytical mind? What is a beauteous nymph? Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, a dash or two of phosphorus and other elements—all to decay soon. But what is *the cosmos?* What is the secret of time, space, and the things that lie beyond time and space? What sinister forces hurl through the black incurious aether these titanic globes of living flame, and the insect-peopled worlds that hover about them? Here—here, at last, is something worthy of the interest of enlightened mankind!!! The veil hangs tantalisingly—what lies on the other side?

. . . . .

By the way—since all habits must be broken gradually, I am breaking the poesy habit that way. . . .

Naturally my changed literary province tends to group around me a new set of proteges and clients—the budding story writers. One of the brightest of these, a very worthy kidlet named Frank Belknap Long, is a resident of your own Manhattan; and I suggest that you look him up in the near future. I fancy he is anywhere betwixt 18 and 20 in age—and I will enclose his latest letter to give an idea of his personality. We must encourage fiction in the United! . . .

Yr. most hble. Obt. Servt.
Theobaldus Fantasticus

62. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Hail, Bolingbroke!

Feby. 10, 1920

That commonplace-book of mine is, as you surmise, rather out of the ordinary. I will quote a few of the items:

A very ancient colossus in a very ancient desert. Face gone. No man hath seen it.

Man climbs mountain toward some horrible goal. Cloud passes over, Man seen no more.

Man makes appointment with old enemy for final settlement. Enemy dies meanwhile. *But appointment is not broken.*

Old house and gardens—take on a singular aspect as seen at twilight by narrator.

But *the* event of the season was the burning of the large Chapman house last Wednesday night—the yellow house across two lawns to the north of #598 Angell. At about 12:30 a.m. I was seated at my table writing when a curious and persistent popping or crackling out doors arrested my attention. Lifting the dark curtain and peering out, I beheld a red world as light as day, with the falling snow-flakes glittering weirdly. Seeking the source of the uncanny glare, I repaired to a north window. There, in full view, was the most impressive sight my eyes have ever beheld. Where that evening had stood the unoccupied Chapman house, recently sold and undergoing repairs, was now a titanic pillar of roaring, living flame amidst the deserted night—reaching into the illimitable heavens and lighting the country for miles around. The heat was intense—even here in the house—and the glare was stupendous. Awaking my aunt, who watched the rest of the spectacle from the window, I went out to view the disaster at close range. Lights had now appeared in all the windows around, and the engines had reached the scene. The house next us caught fire along the edge of the shingles, but was speedily saved by the first spouting of the hose. A high east wind was blowing, and the sparks flew freely, but ice-coated roofs saved the neighbourhood. At one time the chimney of the doomed house fell, carrying with it the south wall, and precipitating the roof and all the floors to the cellar. At last the blaze died down for want of further material. Smoke arose in torrents from the ruins, but the "show was over". The crowd dispersed and went back to bed, and the firemen idly soaked down the glowing embers. Of that once stately house, only the charred east wall was left standing. Today the view from our northern windows resembles devastated France or Belgium! The cause of the blaze was an overheated stove—in which careless workmen had left a fire.

But I must desist, subscribing my self, with customary evidences of regard and protestations of esteem, as

Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.
Archibald Maynwaring

63. TO REINHARDT KLEINER Feby. 10, 1720

My dear Kleiner:—

Really—what pleasure one can gain from puffing away at nauseating and stifling fumes is beyond me! I did it once—when 11 to 14 years old—for no boy in my vicinity was then considered manly unless he surreptitiously emulated the graceful smokestack either behind the stables or in the neighbouring sylvan retreats. I sampled cigars, cigarettes, pipe, and the like; and puffed like a veteran; but always detested the infernal stuff. Glad enough was I to fling away tobacco when long trousers and increased inches made my manliness an obvious fact which needed no nicotinical corroboration! Nor have I any literary need of tobacco. When I go in for drugs, I am no "tin-horn", but buckle right down to opium—vide *Dagon*. Since it is not I, but my heroes, who indulge, I do not feel the ill effects. . . .

. . . . . Each spring I wish I were young again—so that I might be able to ride a bicycle without attracting attention and exciting ridicule. Adults do not ride any more here. I miss the intimate contact with the country which my wheel gave me. Ten years ago there was scarce a cloudless day from May to October that I did not at some hour behold agrestic scenes and spin along quiet meadow-bordered roads where care and complexity dwelt not. . . .

Ever yr. most obt. hble. Servt.
Theobaldus

64. TO REINHARDT KLEINER March 7, 1920

Reverend Bolingbroke:—

I am glad that you find merit in my fictional attempts, and wish I had not dropped fiction in the nine years between 1908 and 1917. Somehow or other, I conceived the idea that my stories were poorer

even than my verse and essays; though I now fully believe the critics who declare the reverse to be true. I am at present full of various ideas, including a hideous novel to be entitled *The Club of the Seven Dreamers*. Of the really great workers in the field of the weird, I hardly think there is any reason to question the leadership of Mr. Poe. I cannot say that Hawthorne appeals so much to me, since he seems hampered to some extent by reality and tameness. However, it is long since I have perused anything of his. I must include a re-reading of him in my present programme of absorption of the bizarre. . . .

. . . . . When I come to review mine own excursions into the province of the Muse, I am conscious that my attitude was never that of the true poet. For lyrical compositions I had little or no use, and believe that most of my zeal lay in the mere love of rhythm, plus the facility which antique verse affords in re-creating the atmosphere of the *past*. Aside from rhythm and archaism, nearly every element which I sought in verse can be supplied equally well by prose. The flight of imagination, and the delineation of pastoral or natural beauty, can be accomplished as well in prose as in verse—often better. It is this lesson which the inimitable Dunsany hath taught me. Poetry to me meant merely the most effective way of asserting my archaic instincts. I could convey more actual archaism in my couplets than in any other avenue of equal brevity and simplicity. Were I to grow sober and introspective like you and the Galpin Kidlet, I should describe mine own nature as tripartite, my interests consisting of three parallel and dissociated groups—(a) Love of the strange and the fantastic. (b) Love of the abstract truth and of scientific logick. (c) Love of the ancient and the permanent. Sundry combinations of these three strains will probably account for all my odd tastes and eccentricities.

I trust that you succeeded in outlining your agnosticism to your pastor without shocking the good soul. How well I recall my tilts with Sunday-School teachers during my last period of compulsory attendance! I was 12 years of age, and the despair of the institution. None of the answers of my pious preceptors would satisfy me, and my demands that they cease taking things for granted quite upset them. Close reasoning was something new in their little world of Semitic mythology. At last I saw that they were hopelessly bound to unfounded dogmata and traditions, and thenceforward ceased to treat them seriously. Sunday-School became to me simply a place wherein to have a little harmless fun spoofing the pious mossbacks. My mother observed this, and no longer sought to enforce my attendance. . . .

. . . . . I hope that your present state is merely one of transition from the idealism of youth to the realism of middle life, when the thinker realises that there is no such thing as ideal happiness and justice, and ceases to strive after illusions so empty and unreal. Solid bourgeois contentment—with the settled conviction that wild pleasures are too rare, elusive, and transitory to be worth seeking—is the best state of mind to be in. One should come to realize that all life is merely a comedy of vain desire, wherein those who strive are the clowns, and those who calmly and dispassionately watch are the fortunate ones who can laugh at the antics of the strivers. The utter emptiness of all the recognised goals of human endeavour is to the detached spectator deliciously apparent—the tomb yawns and grins so ironically! Whatever bliss we can gain, is from watching the farce, removing ourselves from the strife by not expecting more than we receive, and revelling in that world of the unreal which our imagination creates for us. To enjoy tranquillity, and to promote tranquillity in others, is the most enduring of delights. Such was the doctrine of Epicurus, the leading ethical philosopher of the world. If one's interest in life wanes, let him turn to the succour of others in a like plight, and some grounds for interest will be observed to return. About the time I joined the United I was none too fond of existence. I was 23 years of age, and realised that my infirmities would withhold me from success in the world at large. Feeling like a cipher, I felt that I might well be erased. But later I realised that even success is empty. Failure though I be, I shall reach a level with the greatest—and the smallest—in the damp earth or on the final pyre. And I saw that in the interim trivialities are not to be despised. Success is a relative thing—and the victory of a boy at marbles is equal to the victory of an Octavius at Actium when measured by the scale of cosmic infinity. So I turned to observe other mediocre and handicapped persons about me, and found pleasure in increasing the happiness of those who could be helped by such encouraging words or critical services as I am capable of furnishing. That I have been able to cheer here and there an aged man, an infirm old lady, a dull youth, or a person deprived by circumstances of education, affords to me a sense of being not altogether useless, which almost forms a substitute for the real success I shall never know. What matter if none hear of my labours, or if

those labours touch only the afflicted and the mediocre? Surely it is well that the happiness of the unfortunate be made as great as possible; and he who is kind, helpful, and patient, with his fellow-sufferers, adds as truly to the world's combined fund of tranquillity as he who, with greater endowments, promotes the birth of empires, or advances the knowledge and civilisation of mankind. Thus no man of philosophical cast, however circumscribed by poverty or retarded by ailment, need feel himself superfluous so long as he holds the power to improve the spirits of others. My advice to you would to be re-enter active amateurdom and follow my example of accumulating a Johnsonian circle of literary dependents—worthy folk who suffer more than you, and whose pain cou'd be assuaged by the exercise of the critical gifts which you possess in so great an abundance. Or if you are especially qualified to promote contentment in any other way, choose that way. There is a vast satisfaction in alleviating the misfortunes of another. When I am able to bring a smile of gratitude to the vacuous face of a *Crowley* or the childish visage of a *Tryout Smith,* I am impressed with my own ability to do such a thing; and have thereby the better opinion of myself. And I can feel some share of their pleasure, since as a fellow-struggler I am able to appreciate their limitations. The secret of true contentment, I am convinc'd, lies in the achievement of the *cosmical* point of view; whereby the most cruel distinctions betwixt great and small things are shewn to be merely apparent and unreal. The next philosophical step is to acquire the impersonal attitude—to divest oneself of egocentrick consciousness, and assume the role of a spectator at the comedy of man. Thus depersonalised, one may roam through all history and all legend with imagination as a guide; enjoying the pleasant things of life without experiencing the anguish of participation. If lonely in his own life, the dreamer may find company at the tables of Will's or Button's or may join the embattled hosts of some shadowy monarch who defends with fabulous sword the gates of his gorgeous and unheard-of capital, which rises among the gold and diamond mountains beyond the Milky Way. To the impersonal dreamer belongs all infinity—he is lord of the universe and taster of all the beauties of the stars. As for the future—what is sweeter than *oblivion,* which the humblest of us may share with the Kings of all the ages, and even with the gods themselves?

Believe me, Sir, Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.
Epicurus Lackbrain, Gent.

65. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Castle Theobald
April 26, 1920

My dear Bolingbroke:—

. . . . All I know is that smoke is smoke, and just as choking when from a pipe as when from a leaky stove! Of course, connoisseurs make fine distinctions—but I prefer to breathe pure air than to inhale malodorous fumes. Some persons like "high game"—but I don't! To me the ultimate horror of earth is a smoking car. As a rule, I avoid taking drugs to stimulate literary endeavour; but when I try to describe hell—if ever I do—I fancy I shall take a ride in a smoker to work up atmosphere! . . .

Yr. most Obt. hble. Servt.
Lewis Theobald Junr.

66. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Twickenham
May 21, 1920

R. St. Joh, Viscount Bolingbroke / My Lord:—

Last night I had a brief but typical dream. I was standing on the East Providence shore of the Seekonk River, about three quarters of a mile south of the foot of Angell Street, at some unearthly nocturnal hour. The tide was flowing out *horribly*—exposing parts of the river-bed never before exposed to human sight. Many persons lined the banks, looking at the receding waters and occasionally glancing at the sky. Suddenly a blinding flare—reddish in hue—appeared high in the southwestern sky; and *something* descended to earth in a cloud of smoke, striking the Providence shore near Red Bridge—about an eighth of a mile south on Angell Street. The watchers on the banks screamed in horror—"*It* has come—*It* has come at last!"—and fled away into the deserted streets. But I ran toward the bridge instead of away; for I was more curious than afraid. When I reached it I saw

hordes of terror-stricken people in hastily donned clothing fleeing across from the Providence side as from a city accursed by the gods. There were pedestrians, many of them falling by the way, and vehicles of all sorts. Electric cars—the old small cars unused in Providence for six years—were running in close procession—eastward away from the city on both of the double tracks. Their motormen were frantic, and small collisions were numerous. By this time the river-bed was fully exposed—only the deep channel filled with water like a serpentine stream of death flowing through a pestilential plain in Tartarus. Suddenly a glare appeared in the West, and I saw the dominant landmark of the Providence horizon—the dome of the Central Congregational Church, silhouetted weirdly against a background of red. And then, *silently*, that dome abruptly caved in and fell out of sight in a thousand fragments. And from the fleeing populace arose such a cry as only the damn'd utter—and I waked up, confound the luck, with the very deuce of a headache!

Did I tell you in my last letter about my dreams (1) of the ancient house in the marsh, and the staircase that had no end, (2) of the mediaeval castle with the sleeping men-at-arms, and the battle on the plain between the archers of England and the *things* with yellow tabards over their armour, who vanished when their leader was unhelmeted and found to have *no head inside the empty helm*, and (3) of the street car that went by night over a route that had been dismantled for six years, and that lost five hours in climbing College Hill, finally plunging off the earth into a star-strown abyss and ending up in the sand-heaped streets of a ruined city *which had been under the sea?* Those were *some* dreams, believe your Grandpa Theobald!! I tell all these to The Kidlet, and he thinks them rather unusual—as does Mo also, who receives carbon copies. Oh—and one other dream! I was in a museum somewhere down town in Providence, (there ain't no sech place!) trying to sell the curator a bas-relief which *I* had just fashioned from clay. He asked me if I were crazy, attempting to sell him something *modern* when the museum was devoted to antiquities? He seemed an old and very learned man, and smiled kindly. I replied to him in words which I remember *precisely*. "This," I said, "was fashioned in my dreams; and the dreams of man are older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx or garden-girdled Babylon." The curator now bade me shew him my bas-relief, which I did gladly. Its design was

that of a procession of Egyptian priests. As I shewed the sculpture, the old man's manner changed suddenly. His amusement gave way to vague *terror*—I can even now see his blue eyes bulging from beneath his snow-white brows—and he said slowly, softly, and distinctly—"WHO ARE YOU?" I can reproduce the awe and impressiveness of his low voice only in capitals. I replied very prosaically—"My name is Lovecraft—H. P. Lovecraft—grandson of Whipple V. Phillips." I fancied a man of his age could place my grandfather better than he could place me. But he answered impatiently, "No! No!—*before that!*" I answered that I recalled no other identity save in dreams. Then the aged curator offered me a high price for the Thing I had made from clay, but I refused it; for intuition told me that he meant to *destroy* it, whereas I wished it hung upon the wall of the museum. Then he asked me *how much* I would take for the bas-relief; and I jocularly replied, having now no mind to part with it, *"One million pounds sterling."* (Currency mixed!) To my amazement the old man did not laugh. He seemed perplexed, dazed, and frightened. Then he said in a quavering tone: "Call again in a week, please. I will consult with the directors of the corporation." This is the end—although I did not awake here. At this point the dream changed to one of drifting down a stagnant river betwixt high basalt cliffs, and wondering why I drifted; *since the water had no motion, and there was no breath of wind in the awful SILENCE.* This pair of dreams occurred in the middle of an afternoon when I paused in my work from nervous exhaustion and rested my hand on my arm on the table before me. I am coming to a stage where I doze off like this very frequently—it helps me keep up and accomplish more than usual. As mere yarns, these jumbled fantasies would be hardly worth notice; but being bona fide dreams, they are rather picturesque. It gives one a sense of weird, fantastic, and unearthly *experience* to have *seen* these strange sights apparently with the visual eye. I have dreamed like this ever since I was old enough to remember dreams, and probably shall till I descend to avernus. My dreams are just as vivid as in youth, but no more so. Among my best remembered visions are those of the awful cliffs, peaks, and abysses—hideous bleak rock and loathsome blackness—over which I was borne in the clutch of black winged daemons to which I gave the original name of "night-gaunts", at the age of six! Verily, I have travelled to strange places which are not upon the earth or any known planet. I have been a rider of comets, and

a brother to the nebulae. Your own "midnight seizures" are—or were—indeed curious phaenomena. What could you have been seeing—what sight so unthinkable that it must needs be erased from your memory by a merciful oblivion? There be worlds beyond the rim of space which no man hath seen—black worlds which are not round, nor of any shape, but which are *alive*. From them no traveller in the universe of dreams hath ever brought away a recollection —save one traveller only, and he was quite mad, and could never be understood. Have these worlds indeed been visited by you at night? . . . Of genuinely fantastic dreamers, I have discovered but one in amateurdom—this being Miss Jackson. I will enclose—subject to return—an account of a Jacksonian dream which occurred in the early part of 1919, and which I am some time going to weave into a horror story, as I did *The Green Meadow* dream of earlier date, which I think I once shewed you. That earlier dream was exceptionally singular in that I had one exactly like it myself—save that mine did not extend so far. It was only when I had related my dream that Miss J. related the similar and more fully developed one. The opening paragraph of *The Green Meadow* was written for my own dream, but after hearing the other, I incorporated it into the tale which I developed therefrom. . . . I do not see how you can fail to be sensitive to these unreal things. Surely the strange excrescences of the human fancy are as real—in the sense of real phaenomena—as the commonplace passions, thoughts, and instincts of everyday life. There is a giddy exhilaration in looking *beyond* the known world into unfathomable deeps, and a haunting thrill in thoughts of the cryptically horrible. . . . I had a visitor the other night, who gave me an idea for a good story. He was a furry, four-footed young visitor, with a black coat, white gloves and boots, and white around the tip of his nose and the tip of his tail. He sat in a chair near me, purring most inspiringly, when I permitted my fancy to consider his ancient race and heritage. I am intensely fond of his species, as I have doubtless told you more than once; and as I looked upon him my thoughts ran thus:

. . . . . The cat is the soul of antique AEgyptus, and bearer of tales from forgotten empires in Moroë and Ophir. He is the kin of the jungle's lords, and heir to the secrets of hoary and sinister Africa. The Sphinx is his cousin, and he speaks her language; but he is more ancient than the Sphinx, and remembers that which she hath forgotten. . . .

As I mused, a plot took form in my mind. A simple, yet a ghastly plot. And the plot will some day reach the amateur publick in the form of a tale to be entitled *The Cats of Ulthar*. . . . I am only beginning my delvings into the world of literary fantasy.

Yr. obt. Servt.
Theobaldus

67. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Theobald Manor
June 11, 1920

Revered Bolingbroke:—

Your recent indifference to cosmical ideas is actually puzzling to me. Of course, we know that there is no life after death; for life and thought are peculiar to complex material organisms; but about us stretches an illimitable expanse of space filled with other worlds—an expanse wherein we are as nothing—and the titanic questions it suggests fairly beat upon the human mind in a desperate tattoo. What I cannot comprehend, is how your *imagination* can fail to react to these mysterious abysses; how you can escape the burning curiosity of a child at a nearly-closed door through whose crevice come sounds of strange and unearthly wonder, and fragments of sights that suggest unthinkable things. How, after these terrible glimpses, you can still remain indifferent to ultramundane hints; can still take tiny mankind and his affairs and desires seriously, I find actual difficulty in understanding. My only solution is that in you emotion replaces imagination; that the keenly sensitive development which in the philosopher affects the imaginative and speculative functions, in the poet affects those simple nervous-ganglial centres which give rise to the emotions of human relationship.

You and I undoubtedly represent cases of unusually *localised* and precisely opposite nervous development. I am objective enough to realise that my lack of interest in purely human matters is in its way as inexplicable to the humano-centrist, as his lack of interest in cosmic

problems is to me. We both *see the same things*, but because of our dissimilar receptive or interpretative organisations these things assume with us a totally different order in our active consciousness. You are looking through a microscope, I through a telescope; you tend toward subjectivity, I toward objectivity. Your valuecentric standard is man, mine infinity and eternity. Perhaps a good illustration of our differences—or of my difference from the average person in this especial matter—would be the manner of receiving that gradual unfolding or reality from ideality which comes with years, and which is sometimes called *disillusionment*. When young, we believe in the existence of many virtues which our older eyes perceive to be unreal. That is, as we grow older we perceive more and more keenly that the motives for human acts are exclusively selfish, and that the average person is governed by no moral law save appearances and self-interest. To most, and probably to you, this disillusionment was markedly *painful*. The discovery of the unreality of "Sunday-School" motives gives to the average person something of an unwelcome shock. But to me, this process had merely a *scientific interest*. All motives being simply material phenomena, I was not at all crushed at finding that the idealistic system is false; if I was annoyed, It was only in the way that a scientist is annoyed when an old theory breaks down and he is forced to assimilate the details of a new theory. For human ideals never had any personal interest or application to me. I was ever an intellectual outsider—spectator and not a participant. Dissillusionment's only pang was a sense of mortification at a slight scientific error—an error whereby I had estimated too large a gap betwixt the species *homo sapiens* and *homo niger vel Africannus*. I now saw that these species, together with the extinct *pithecanthropus erectus* of Java, represent less evolutional separation than I had before calculated. But as for emotional disturbance over "lost ideals"—bah! Theobaldus was a cosmic observer—

> "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
> That he shou'd weep for her?"

And so years have not changed me very much. An outlook like mine never has many disturbances; for no matter what I may observe in man, it neither surprises nor impresses me. Of course, I have personal preferences and disgusts; but to me all personal things are philosophically trivial. My human reactions remain as in childhood because I deem

them superficial. I have the same repulsions and respects, and disillusionment does not "mature" or "broaden" them, because they were always based on *pure taste, never faith*. . . .

. . . . . As to dreams—the only trouble with fictionising them is plot-invention. In spite of all the value of imagery, the real Zoë and Psyche of a story is the *plot*—a connected, climactic unit which must move along with relentless coherence and suspense to a thrill of horror and surprise which shall impress the reader more than all the fine speech and scenery combined. The plot must be stronger than the atmosphere, else the "story" will degenerate into a mere fantasy. It is far easier to write prose-poems than to create real stories, and I am determined to make my products *stories* in every sense of the word. In *Randolph Carter* I did my best. I cannot always reach that level, but I can at least avoid such vogue junk as my *Memory* in the *Coöperative*. De Quincey is familiar to me, but impressed me more with his language and erudition than with his fancy. I never took opium, but if I can't beat him for *dreams* from the age of three or four up, I am a dashed liar! Space, strange cities, weird landscapes, unknown monsters, hideous ceremonies, Oriental and Egyptian gorgeousness, and indefinable mysteries of life, death, and torment, were daily—or rather nightly commonplaces to me before I was six years old. Today it is the same, save for a slightly increased *objectivity*. Today the percentage of dreams in which I am an observer and not an actor has slightly risen. As to the Rubaiyat of Omar and Fitzgerald, it is so long since I read the thing that I have forgotten its details. I did not especially like it—which is doubtless the reason I never perused it a second time. I am now perusing some of the pessimistical writings of S. L. Clemens, which I find much to my taste. "What is Man?" is a veritable masterpiece.

Yr. most obt. humble Servt.
H:Lovecraft

68. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Still at the Old Stand
June 25, 1920

Venerated Viscount:—

As to philosophy—its effects on various individuals are different. I merely know that in my case the cosmos dwarfs my interest in the tiny insects called men. Their doings seem so absurd and trivial when one reflects upon their absolute insignificance. I wish the poor devils (including myself, of course) could all be mercifully blotted out by a whiff of cyanogen gas in some comet's tail! The immortality myth is too childish to talk about. Of course there can be no technically positive knowledge of anything of the sort, but we may safely say that a life snuffed out survives no more than an electric light smashed to pieces. Life and light—both are forms of energy manifest only through material media. Destroy the medium in either case, and the energy is irreclaimably lost in transformation to other forms.

Yr. most Obt. Servt.
Theobaldus

69. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
November 19, 1920

My dear Mr. Long:—

I am very glad you liked the tales I sent for your perusal, and feel vastly complimented that you should have gone to the pains of copying them. This latter process is what I hate—I delight in composition, but once I have written a thing it is a dreaded task to type it. I think I am constitutionally lazy, for mechanical activity bores and fatigues me immeasurably. I should probably have others type my manuscripts for me if it were not for the fact that no one but myself can read the scrawled

and interlined original versions. I am always searching for exactly the right word, and make many changes before I am satisfied; so that my rough draughts are the very antithesis of neatness. About the plot of *The Tree*—it was the result of some rather cynical reflection on the possible real motives which may underlie even the most splendid-appearing acts of mankind. With this nucleus I developed a tale based on the Greek idea of divine justice and retribution, (a very pretty though sadly mythical idea!) with the added Oriental notion of the soul of a man passing into something else. Quite an heterogeneous combination—modern cynicism, Greek tragedy, and Oriental fantasy! . . .

. . . . . The remaining two enclosures are my very latest products. I wrote *Celephais* a week ago, and finished *From Beyond* only yesterday morning. Your eyes will be the first save my own to behold the latter yarn.

(The remainder of this letter has been lost.)

70. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
Jany. 26, 1921

My dear Mr. Long:—

. . . . . I am not sure but that all human activity is based on a striving for excitement and pleasure, and that art is a form of devising a factitious excitement to serve in place of natural excitement which circumstances deny.

. . . . . You must reflect that some of the greatest men have been the smallest—Newton was almost a dwarf, Pope, was tiny, Poe was small and delicate—but why continue? The catalogue is well-nigh endless. Sometimes I am provoked by my own hugeness—I am five feet and nearly eleven inches, and vary in weight between 150 and 175 according to my immediate state of health. I half fancy that I am too large to be classed among the real literati—though Dunsany's six feet four inches heartens me! Galpin is six feet one inch, but lean to the point of emaciation. I am deceptive in appearance—except for a certain pallor of complexion I suggest robustness rather than ill-health, for my

nervous afflictions do not entail any organic disorder. This exterior often causes me suffering through misjudgment. If you received G. J. Houtain's *Zenith* you will see how I impress a stranger—as a husky, pampered hypochondriac, tied down to indolence by indulgent relatives, and by false notions of heredity. Nothing, of course, could be less true. If Houtain knew how constant are my struggles against the devastating headaches, dizzy spells, and spells of poor concentrating power which hedge me in on all sides, and how feverishly I try to utilise every available moment for work, he would be less confident in classifying my ills as imaginary. I do not arbitrarily pronounce myself an invalid *because* of a nervous heredity. The condition itself is only too apparent—the hereditary part is only one explanatory factor. (My paternal grandfather had to retire from active life because of a breakdown, my maternal grandfather died of a shock in 1904, my father died in a sanitarium in 1898 after five years of total collapse, and my mother is now in a sanitarium from her second nervous breakdown—1919.) . . .

I am glad you like *Nyarlathtep*, and at the risk of boring you will enclose my latest—just finished and typed—*The Nameless City*. This had its basis in a dream, which in turn was probably caused by contemplation of the peculiar suggestiveness of a pharse in Dunsany's *Book of Wonder*—"the unreverberate blackness of the abyss". The character of the "mad Arab Alhazred" is fictitious. The lines are mine—written especially for this story—and *Abdul Alhazred* is a psyeudonym I took when I was about five years old and crazy about the *Arabian Nights*. I hardly know yet what to think of this story—you are the first to see it—but I certainly put enough work into it. I tore up two beginnings, only hitting the right atmosphere the third time, and destroyed (or rather rearranged) one conclusion. I aim at a cumulative succession of horrors—thrill upon thrill and each one worse! . . .

With all good wishes, Most sincerely yours,

H. P. Lovecraft

71. TO MRS. SARAH S. LOVECRAFT

589 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
February 24, 1921

My dearest Mother:—

I was greatly pleased to receive your letter, and thank you in addition for the small primroses—which still adorn this apartment—the *Weekly Review*, the banana, and that most captivating cat picture, which I shall give a permanent place on the wall.

The Amateur Journalists' Conference of Tuesday, February 22, was a most distinguished success in every way, and gave me the most pleasant day I can recall since childhood. The new suit, worn for the first time, was a work of art, and made me appear as nearly respectable as my face permits—and even the face was almost at its best. In short, the excellence of my attire permitted me to be absolutely unconscious of my appearance—to forget that I was visible, as it were—which is the secret of all genuine enjoyment in public. Every plan materialised with clockwork success. I was feeling well, planned for the 12:25 train, and caught the latter without hurrying. Being an enthusiast about railways and travel, my enjoyment began at once; and I watched the countryside whirl by with a feeling of old-time satisfaction, remembering my more frequent rides of other days. The train reached Boston on time, and I strolled leisurely to the Quincy House, which I reached in time for the very first of the programme.

. . . . . Finally the speechmaking session arrived. I had prepared a set speech on my designated subject, *The Best Poet*. . . . I did not, however, read it from the manuscript; since I found that all the preceding speakers were making wholly impromptu flourishes. I waited till the last moment for my decision, and was soon glad of my choice; for to my own astonishment I was able to make an extemporaneous address (around the same synopsis as the manuscript, but filled with immediate allusions) which evoked fairly thunderous applause. Afterward I was still further surprised by the compliments I received, for no less than five persons, including the Toastmaster, told me that it was the best speech of the evening. Houtain told me never to read from MS.

again—that I was a born public speaker! All of which is rather amazing to me, since I am a hermit who had never before addressed a banquet. The enclosed set speech, as I have intimated, will give you an approximate idea of the tenor and sequence of my remarks. Actually, I introduced many embellishments. When I spoke of not naming the *really* best poet because of modesty I received an interjected bit of applause coupled with laughter at the attempted humour. At this I paused, and prefaced my further remarks by saying (in the manner of vaudeville monologue artists) "Now that the tempestuous laughter and applause of this large and intelligent audience have subsided, I will continue—" Probably my freedom from embarrassment, which Houtain said was unusual in one who had never addressed a banquet before, was due to that immaculate Outlet suit. To think I owe a post-prandial triumph to a set of Jews! Pardon the egotism which doubtless animates this narration— I thought the incident might interest you, since such a role is so diametrically opposite to my usual secluded routine. . . .

I showed my new paternal watch to all who had been with me at Newton Centre when its predecessor had caused me so much trouble. Its appearance was highly praised, and my word regarding its time-keeping qualities was taken without reservations—so much so that Mrs. McMullen, who had to leave before the formal dispersing, asked me the time as the evening advanced. It has not varied a second since November, when I first adopted it, and I have never let it run down. It is odd how much more care one takes of a really nice thing. I was constantly letting my other watches run down—I knew they were cheap, coarsely made affairs. But now I am punctiliousness itself, conscious of the real worth and elegance of my horological heirloom. . . .

With all good wishes, I remain

Yr. most aff: Son & obt: Servt:
H. P. L.

72. TO MRS. SARAH S. LOVECRAFT

Thursday, March 24, 1921.

My dearest Mother:—

I was glad to receive your letter of Sunday, and must thank you exceedingly for the *Reviews,* apples, and beautiful picture of the Taj Mahal, which reminds one of the fabulous Oriental edifices in Lord Dunsany's tales. Just now I am taking a breathing spell before plunging into a fresh sea of Bush* work—he has sent a new rush order which ought to bring in a considerable sum, but I shall not begin it tonight. One needs a fresh start to cope with his impossibilities! He enclosed in his order a new circular about himself and his work, with a new picture which looks almost human. I think I will send it out for you to see, asking that you return it eventually. The fellow has improved in aspect, and certainly has a formidable-sounding list of lecture subjects; but is, if possible, worse than ever as a "poet". He is humanity's prime enigma—sublimely inscrutable!

My trip of a week ago was a brilliant success—I can scarce recall another time so enjoyable in years. The old green tie I used is not a *bright* green, but it filled the technical requirements. I would not have worn a bright one in public even had I possessed it! I found that others followed the same course—none of the visitors had on anything in the least Irish or conspicuous! The journey to Boston was pleasing and uneventful, and the sunny nature of the day made it even more delightful than the trip of last month, when clouds hung overhead and slush encumbered the ground. The landscape was springlike enough to attract the artistic eye, and I beheld many an agreeable rural scene as the train—an accommodation—rolled from village to village. Arrived at the South Station, I took subway and car to Allston and was soon at the now familiar 20 Webster Street. The house was decorated with streamers of green paper in honour of the departed Celtic saint, and the presiding hostesses, Mesdames Miniter and Sawyer and W. V. Jackson, were attired in green habiliments with green paper ribbons incorporated in their coiffures. Ere long the house began to fill with guests, more or less verdured for the occasion, though not conspicuously so. . . .

* Mr. Bush was one of Lovecraft's most persistent revision clients.

The circle nearing its end, Grandpa Theobald was called upon. Extracting from my pocket the fatal manuscript, I proceeded to horrify the assemblage with my spectral *Moom-Bog*, rendered with all the rhetorical effect needed to heighten the terror, though prefaced by a few impromptu comic remarks. From the amount of applause received, I judge that it was not wholly a failure, though probably only about half the company really liked it. After me came only the chairman herself—Mrs. Ellis—and she read an original story which was absolutely the worst I have ever encountered in amateur journalism. It was hardly more than a collection of later Victorian stock phrases and situations, and for a long time I fancied the intent was satirical—on the order of Leacock's *Nonsense Novels* in *Harper's*. But it was all meant seriously, as I finally saw. The next day it was the standing joke of the household, and laughter was evoked merely by quoting a sentence or two from it. But the audience was admirably polite, and the good lady saw not a single trace of levity in her amused hearers. . . .

. . . . . All are skilled in that pleasing and Houtain-like flattery which so cheers the spirits of an obscure author; though the apparent flattery of Winifred V. Jackson appears to be really the result of a deficient sense, since I found my worthless poetical attempts predominating in her old scrap books which date back to a time when their inspection by me was probably never anticipated. I am glad that at least one or two readers have found my trash worth preserving, though that fact does not blind me to its actual want of merit. . . . In cataloguing the inhabitants of 20 Webster Street one should not forget the maltese feline gentleman who goes by the appellation of "Tat"—a word coined in the dim past by the eldest of the now grown, wedded, and departed Sawyer boys. Tat has a reputation for wildness and fear of strangers, but before I left he permitted me to pick him up, and sat contented in my lap, purring sleepily. He is exactly the colour of my new Outlet suit, so I would not have minded his shedding—but as it happened, he did not shed. I am told that I am the first stranger to succeed in holding him—but cats are my especial province, anyway! . . .

I note the Guiney poem by Thos. Jones with great interest—I had cut the same piece from a *Transcript* of A. E. P. B.'s to send you, but you were ahead of me! There is an excellent account of Miss Guiney in a *Literary Digest* I have—I will endeavor to find it and send it out by L. D. C., who is now here. Miss G. was referred to at Allston dur-

ing my sojourn—for years W. V. Jackson has sent me every clipping she has found pertaining to her; in fact, I believe you have seen most of them. Guiney poetry is not of the variety I most value, however. I can perceive its excellence, but prefer art requiring less interpretation. The greatest bards have been the simplest—Homer, Virgil, and Shakespeare require no subtle searching in order to be comprehended and appreciated. Even Keats, who I believe was Miss G.'s particular idol, dealt more in crystally clear images than in learned riddles and cryptical adumbration.

I am glad you saw *David Garrick*, though sorry it kept you awake afterward. I saw the Albee Company present it several years ago—the year Jack Hess was trying to break into the company. Jack was absurdly awkward in the required costume—fortunately for him he had no lines to speak. Churchill had the part of Garrick, and needless to say, acquitted himself with great credit. I also saw this play in moving pictures with Dustin Farnum as Garrick. This was one of the finest scenic productions I ever saw—the eighteenth century and Dr. Johnson's day mirrored without flaw or anachronism. In matters of scenery the moving picture can of course leave the stage far behind; though this hardly atones for the lack of sound and colour. I have been hoping that the collegians would present their Dunsany plays at the hospital, so that you might see the work of this literary giant—if they do, pray do not fail to attend! . . .

Concerning hats—I will think about snowy straws when the sun climbs a bit higher in the zodiac. My 1916 and 1917 "lids" are still capable of taking on a semblance of respectability under proper treatment, and since shape is more important than hue, it would be no disaster if I skipped another season. I had almost rather have a new felt hat in the autumn—my 1917 hat is good, but its surface lacks that freshness which one finds in less archaic millinery. However—the one former crying need, a new winter suit, is certainly fulfilled in glorious fashion, as you will see when some suitable spring day affords the opportunity! . . .

But I must close, subscribing myself as

Yr most aff: Son & obt: Servt:

H. P. L.

73. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Home as Usual
April 23, 1921

Honour'd Bolingbroke!—

. . . . . I am picking up a new style lately—running to pathos as well as horror. The best thing I have yet done is *The Quest of Iranon* whose English Loveman calls the most musical and flowing I have yet written, and whose sad plot made one prominent poet actually weep—not at the crudity of the story, but at the sadness. Then I have written another hair-raiser, *The Moon-Bog*. This was concocted half to order for the Hub Club. They invited me to their meeting of March 10, which was supposed to be in honour of the not unknown Sanctus Patricius—the Scotsman who drave from Hibernia all the snakes save the Sinn Fein. For this meeting they wished me to read some contribution pertaining to Hibernia, and not having any ready made, I perpetrated *The Moon-Bog*. . . .

. . . . . I have not much interest in anything nowadays unless it is wild and weird. I am so beastly tired of mankind and the world that nothing can interest me unless it contains a couple of murders on each page or deals with horrors unnamable and unaccountable that leer down from the external universes. And yet I am wading through some new books in an effort to keep up with my boy and the philosophical studies in which I am endeavouring to follow him. It is odd that an old man should be so much influenced by a kid so vastly his junior, but it remains a fact that no other one human creature has moulded my thought and opinions as extensively as has that Alfredus child. The secret is this: that he is intellectually *exactly like me* save in degree. In degree he is immensely my superior—he is what I should like to be but have not brains enough to be. Our minds are cast in precisely the same mould, save that his is finer. He alone can grasp the direction of my thoughts and amplify them. And so we go down the dark ways of knowledge; the poor plodding old man, and ahead of him the alert little link-boy holding the light and pointing out the path. . . .

I have never perused the works of Georgius Moore, Esq., though I

may in the course of my Galpin-led explorations. In considering the origin of my opinions I have recently wondered whether or not my anti-erotic views are too hasty; formed from mere subjective prejudice rather than accurate and impersonal observation. I have opposed eroticism for several reasons, (a) because of the acknowledged repulsiveness of direct erotic manifestations, as felt by all races and cultures and expressed in reticence to a greater or less degree, (b) because of the obvious kinship of erotic instincts to the crudest and earliest neural phenomena of organic nature, rather than to the phenomena resulting from complex and advanced development (i.e., purely intellectual phenomena), (c) because of the apparent connexion betwixt ages of erotic interest and national decadence, and (d) because so far as I could judge erotic interests are overrated; being in truth mere trifles which engross crude minds when more worthy interests are lacking. It was my theory that eroticism would diminish if thinkers would awake and turn to really important phenomena. Such, is brief, were the bases of my opinions; but perusal of representative realistic works without prejudice leads me to attempt a revaluation; a revaluation possible because of my increased impersonalism. When I dissociate myself altogether from humanity, and view the world as through a telescope, I can consider more justly phenomena which at close range disgust me. Thus I am coming to be convinced that the erotic instinct is in the majority of mankind far stronger than I could ever imagine without wide reading and observation; that it relentlessly clutches the average person—even of the thinking classes—to a degree which makes its overthrow by higher interests impossible. Probably my recommendation of dismissing it by displacement by purely imaginative and cosmic interests is an absurdity based on ignorance of its extent and intensity. Furthermore, detached observation makes it evident that all ethical systems based on erotic repression have been futile and hypocritical. Beneath the surface of Anglo-Saxonism is apparently as much eroticism as existed openly amongst the Greeks; and even more repellent in form because furtive and little modified by aesthetic considerations. Mankind, in short, is less evolved than I had thought; his seeming improvement being a mask rather than an alteration. Lastly, the force of anti-erotic arguments is weakened by consideration of the origin of ideals of decency. These ideals are probably gained from very early race-experience, when martial and nomadic existence demanded a concentration of energy in

the sternest channels, and when the emotional excitement of killing replaced the softer excitement of amorousness. Now the old joys of slaughter are suppressed, and the healthy blood-thirst becomes languishing romance. To sum up, the reality of erotic dominance is impressed upon the most reluctant observer by the sheer extent and pervasiveness of amatory phenomena. What has survived every attempt at modification must be important, and to criticise or try to correct is futile. Much as a delicate mind may grow nauseated at the bestiality of mankind, that same mind cannot deny what it discovers to exist—and surely romance is no more crude than the analogous phenomenon of hunger. All, then, that we must ask, is a more refined and artistic treatment of the erotic motive. From what I have heard, the fault of Saxon eroticism is its morbidness, which no doubt results from a social system which seeks to banish it, and which therefore only makes it the more obnoxious when it breaks out. I suppose that this is the trouble with George Moore. The only remedy would seem to lie in the gradual evolution of society out of the puritan phase, and the sanctioning of some looser morality or hetairism. This seems to be the idea adumbrated by Nietzsche and other realists—to remove morbid erotic interest by removing the prejudices and inhibitions which make it doubly strong. It is quite possible that the net amount of vulgarism would thus be decreased rather than increased; surely, the decrease in hypocrisy would make for a gain in wholesomeness. . . . Thus have I changed my views on what I formerly censured. What is inherent in the majority cannot be extirpated—man cannot be moulded to an ideal society and literature; society and literature must conform to man as he is. . . . I expect nothing of man, and disown the race. The only folly is in expecting what is never attained; man is most contemptible when compared with his own pretensions. It is better to laugh at man from outside the universe, than to weep for him within. . . .

Yr. most humble & obt. Servt.
L. Theobald, Junr.

74. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Venerable 598
29 April, 1921

My Son:

The Hoag book is now completed, and Mortonius hath sent me an unbound copy. It is pleasing to me, to behold mine own name upon the title-page of an actual volume, as writer of the biographical and critical preface. You shall certainly have a copy of the finished product—as shall most of my other closest friends in amateurdom—since I have asked honest Jonathan for 20 copies; waiving all monetary renumeration for my share of the editing.

With every good wish,
Yr. obt. grandfather
L. Theobald Junr.

75. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

St. Angell's Priory
Friday the 13th, May 1921

Sir Wilful Wildrake, Bt. / Brooklyn, in New-York / Distinguish'd Sir:

. . . . . To me, the element of *conflict* is essential—I must always have something to hate and fight, and will never quit the field of controversy and satire. *Speculation* is also indispensable, for my mind is distractingly curious and sensitive as to the unknown phaenomena and abysses of space that press upon it from the world and the aether beyond. Anything savouring of quiet and tameness is maddeningly abhorrent to me—not in actual life, for that I wish as placid as possible; but in thought, which is my more vivid life. The strange, the unnatural, the terrible—all these things are necessary to me. . . . Then, as a contrast, I like sometimes to gaze upon the immemorially ancient countryside as it sleeps under a lazy sun or magical moon, and mark the roofs of distant cottages or the spire of some distant hamlet amongst the hills. To me life is a picture, of which I have never been and will

never be a part. I shall never be very merry or very sad, for I am more prone to analyse than to feel. What merriment I have is always derived from the satirical principle, and what sadness I have, is not so much personal, as a vast and terrible melancholy at the pain and futility of all existence in a blind and purposeless cosmos. My melancholy would be less if I had more power of endurance—it arises largely from my easy fatigue, and consequent inability to write and exert myself for long continuous periods. Give me an inexhaustible faculty of creating literary images, and I would be as happy as a prince; as it is, I shall probably die of my own hand some day, from the sheer desolating monotony of grey days which I am not strong enough to fill and diversify. In one matter we are alike—our scepticism regarding cosmic purpose, and our consequent contempt for owlish earnestness and hectic activity. Serious ethical effort, I become increasingly convinced, is hideously bourgeois, futile, and unsophisticated. Determinism—which you call Destiny—rules inexorably; though not exactly in the personal way you seem to fancy. We have no specific destiny against which we can fight—for the fighting would be as much a part of the destiny as the final end. The real fact is simply that every event in the cosmos is caused by the action of antecedent and circumjacent forces, so that whatever we do is unconsciously the inevitable product of Nature rather than of our own volition. If an act correspond with our wish, it is Nature that made the wish, and ensured its fulfilment. When we see an apparent chain of circumstances leading toward some striking denouement, we say it is "Fate". That is not true in the sense meant, for all of those circumstances might have been deceptive, so that a hidden and unexpected cause would have turned matters to an utterly opposite conclusion. The chain of appearances are as much a part of fate as the result, whichever the latter may be—and more; there is no such thing as a final result, since all cosmic existence is but an endless and purposeless chain beginning and leading nowhere. You are, for instance, following your "destiny" no more now than when you were pious. Inexorable circumstance made you pious once, and makes you sceptical now—perhaps it will make you pious again when the nymphs no longer divert you. No one state is any more natural to you than the other, since it is natural that you should pass through any stage which you do pass through. No life has any meaning or central principle—a man is merely an infinitesimal fragment of that cosmic mess of matter which is

the playground of capricious, kaleidoscopic natural forces. We are what we are at the moment, merely because we are. Sometimes we may guess from our present state how we are likely to turn out, but all the real causes are in the hands of forces we can never fathom.

Yr. most humble, most obedient Servt.
L: Theobald Junr.

76. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

598 Angell St.
Providence, Rhode Island
June 1, 1921

Dear Mrs. Renshaw:—

I am answering letters promptly these last few days, because I lack the will and energy to do anything heavier. The death of my mother on May 24 gave me an extreme nervous shock, and I find concentration and continuous endeavour quite impossible. I am, of course, supremely unemotional; and do not weep or indulge in any of the lugubrious demonstrations of the vulgar—but the psychological effect of so vast and unexpected a disaster is none the less considerable, and I cannot sleep much, or labour with any particular spirit or success.

Despite my mother's nervous illness and presence at a sanitarium for two years, the fatal malady was intirely different and unconnected—a digestive trouble of sudden appearance which necessitated an operation. No grave result was apprehended till the very day before death, but it then became evident that only a strong constitution could cause survival. Never strong or vigorous, my mother was unable to recover. The result is the cause of wide and profound sorrow, although to my mother it was only a relief from nervous suffering. For two years she had wished for little else—just as I myself wish for oblivion. Like me, she was an agnostic with no belief in immortality, and wished for death all the more because it meant peace and not an eternity of boresome consciousness. For my part, I do not think I shall wait for a natural death; since there is no longer any particular reason why I should exist. During my mother's life-time I was aware that voluntary euthanasia on my part would cause her distress, but it is now possible for me to regulate

the term of my existence with the assurance that my end would cause no one more than a passing annoyance—of course my aunts are infinitely considerate and solicitous, but the death of a nephew is seldom a momentous event. Possibly I shall find enough interesting things to read and study to warrant my hanging on indefinitely, but I do not intend to endure boredom beyond a certain limit. It is better to be as one was in the eternity before he was born. My mother was, in all probability, the only person who thoroughly understood me, with the possible exception of Alfred Galpin. She was a person of unusual charm and force of character, accomplished in literature and the fine arts; a French scholar, musician, and painter in oils. I shall not again be likely to meet with a mind so thoroughly admirable.

. . . . . Altogether, Kant is one whose name might be quite readily commenced with a lower-case "c". His value in stimulating thought and advancing philosophy need not be questioned, but in matters of detail he is simply an empty and exaggerated name—one of those figures who receive accretions of blind adulation until they become mere magic words—mystical abracadabras of classical tradition whose revered mouthings and dialectics would evaporate if examined without the deafness and blindness of irrational veneration. As sequels to Kant, I sincerely trust that you will read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, in the other named; following these with the most modern rational work—*Modern Science and Materialism,* by Hugh Elliot, (1919). To emerge from the artificial fog of empty, resonant, mystical words without a single real idea behind them, into the clear light of minds with actual conceptions, is a tonic to the intellect. Lest you fancy that I am making an idol of Nietzsche as others do of Kant, let me state clearly that I do not swallow him whole. His ethical system is a joke—or a poet's dream, which amounts to the same thing. It is in his method, and his account of the basic origin and actual relation of existing ideas and standards, which make him the master figure of the modern age and founder of unvarnished sincerity in philosophic thought.

Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna, whose system of psycho-analysis I have begun to investigate, will probably prove the end of idealistic thought. In details, I think he has his limitations; and I am inclined to accept the modifications of Adler, who in placing the ego above the eros makes a scientific return to the position which Nietzsche assumed for wholly philosophical reasons. . . .

As I grow older, I lose much of the prejudice and shallow enthusiasm for empirical and accepted traditions which retarded my progress toward realism in earlier years. I have today not a single well-defined wish save to die or to learn facts. This position makes me eminently receptive, for a new idea no longer meets with any conflict from old ideas—I can change my theories as often as valid evidence is changed, or as my judgment improves through exercise in the province of philosophical reflection. I am, I hope, now a complete machine without a disturbing and biassing volition; a machine for the reception and classification of ideas and the construction of theories. As such, I may say that the obsoleteness of religion and idealism as systems of enlightened thought is impressed upon me with redoubled force. If any thing is true, it is that these beliefs are soon to be finally extinct until some cataclysm shall wipe out civilisation and inaugurate a new Dark Age of myth and ignorance.

Believe me,
Yr. most obedient Servt.
HPLovecraft

77. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
June 4, 1921

My dear Mr. Long:—

Afflictions go—and come. The ocular trouble which disturbed me when last I wrote you has subsided, but to take its place has come the nervous shock resulting from the death of my mother on May 24. . . . My mother was a person of unusual charm and force of character; accomplished in literature and the fine arts—a French scholar, musician, and painter in oils. She was a graduate of Wheaton College.

. . . . . The only real tranquillity—the true Epicurean ataraxia,—comes from the assumption of the objective, external point of view whereby we stand off as spectators and watch ourselves without caring much; a triumph of mind over feeling. . . .

In the absence of any new material, I will send—subject to return—

two papers containing collaborated work which you have not seen before. *Hesperia* is a manuscript magazine which I circulate in Great Britain; *The United Coöperative* is an unfinished copy of a coming paper held up indefinitely by the printer in Wisconsin. The two tales in question, *The Green Meadow* and *The Crawling Chaos*—were written around ideas of the amateur poet Winifred V. Jackson, who probably possesses the greatest and most singular imagination in amateur journalism, and who will one day be famous in the outside world.

. . . . . In prose technique she fails, hence can utilise *story* ideas only in collaboration with some technician. These ideas are generally fantastic and terrible in the extreme, and so curiously like my own conceptions that I can develop and express them—in some cases build upon them—with so little difference that the result shows no sign of dual authorship. Such tales are published under the pseudonyms "Elizabeth Berkeley" and "Lewis Theobald Jun." *The Green Meadow* is the earlier of the two tales enclosed, and has a curious history. It began with me—the seacoast and forest scene being an actual dream of my own, around which I wrote the first paragraph of the story proper as an isolated bit on which to build a later narrative. The paragraph was a mere impression, or bit of colouring. Later, in the course of a discussion on imaginative writing, I showed it to Miss Jackson, who was amazed to find that it corresponded exactly to a dream of her own—a dream which had extended much farther than mine. Upon her relating this dream, and furnishing a *map* of its supposed scene, I decided to abandon the plan for an original story and develop the Jacksonian outline—which I did, supplying the quasi-realistic aërolite introduction from my own imagination. W. P. Cook will eventually print *The Green Meadow,* but Heaven only knows when. . . .

. . . . . I know this attitude is not a popular one—but I am not a popular thinker. I accept no literary school in its entirety—I am for Saxon innocence but against Saxon preaching; for modern sincerity but against modern morbidness; for romantic wonder but against romantic sentimentality; for artistic nonmorality but against artistic immorality. In short, I am a thorough eclectic, perhaps describable as a Greek influenced by Grimm's fairy tales and Poe! I believe that art should not teach, but simply picture. It should deal with images more than ideas; should thrill rather than convince. . . .

. . . . . I do not think that a man who is interested in human

conduct can be an artist at all—that is, unless he forgets this interest when he takes up his pen for the purposes of art. Tennyson as an artist is inferior to Poe, because he drew no pictures beyond the commonplace vision of the stolid bourgeoisie, and aroused no emotions beyond the placid vapidities of dull Victorian family life. He is a being of milk and water, and derives his fame mainly from a marvellous gift of rhythmical melody and an ability to please the unimaginative mind. Tennyson cannot be compared to Swinburne, and even Swinburne cannot be compared to Poe. If Poe never drew a human character who lives in the memory, it is because human beings are too contemptible and trivial to deserve such remembrance. Poe saw beyond the vulgar anthropocentric sphere, and realised that men are only puppets; *that events and circumstances are the only vital things.* I believe that Poe's fiction is more important than his verse. The verse attains marvellous heights, but the tales are above all heights—fragments of cosmic perfection beyond the universe of dimensions. As a critic he leads all other Americans, and only in humour did he fail. Of course, I may be prejudiced; since my own aesthetic perception is admittedly narrow, and inclined toward those particular fields in which Poe worked. And yet I believe that I am not far wrong; that Poe is indisputably the one great literary figure of the United States, and is likely to remain so. He had a peculiar province, *but he spoke for that province with a perfection greater than that with which anyone else in America has spoken for his own province*

Most sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

78. TO MISS WINIFRED VIRGINIA JACKSON

589 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
June 7, 1921

My dear Miss Jackson:—

It may indeed be said with justice that you have lost a friend in my mother for although you never heard directly from her, she may be

reckoned among the earliest and most enthusiastic admirers of your work. As I recall her especial appreciation of your poems, from the very first she saw, I regret the more that you did not know her personally, either by letter or meeting. Of amateurdom in general her opinion was not high, for she had a certain aesthetic hypersensitiveness which made its crudenesses very obvious and very annoying to her—in fact, she was rather ashamed of my complete absorption in an institution having so many mediocre phases. But from the mass of amateur writings she singled your poetry out at once for the highest praise and keenest liking, and never ceased to read every scrap of your work which she could secure. Moreover, she regarded it not merely as mature writing, but as literature to be enjoyed apart from its setting. Many of your poems she knew by heart, and frequently repeated; especially *A Merchant from Arcady* and the didactic piece *If You Think You are Beaten, Well, Why?*—this latter as an antidote to my own frequent and unavoidable depression. . . . Considering her literary taste as manifested in other fields, I believe you have a right to feel very substantially complimented by the extreme liking she displayed—a liking which I have here set forth without exaggeration in any particular, no matter how odd it may seem when related of one who never met you or wrote you directly. In case it would interest you to know my mother's appearance during these latter days, I enclose a snap-shot—inadequate enough, I regret to say—which I took a year ago last autumn. Her appearance was as handsome as mine is homely, and her youthful pictures would form close rivals to your own in a contest for aesthetic supremacy. Her beauty was of the opposite type—a very fair complexion, but dark eyes and dark brown hair before it became grey. Some of her portraits have, in truth, been mistaken for art studies. . . .

Yr. most oblig'd & Obt. Servt:
HP Lovecraft

79. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

June 12, 1921

My dear Klei:—

Psychologically I am conscious of a vastly increased aimlessness and inability to be interested in events; a phenomenon due partly to the fact that much of my former interest in things lay in discussing them with my mother and securing her views and approval. This bereavement decentralises existence—my sphere no longer possesses a nucleus, since there is now no one person especially interested in what I do or whether I be alive or dead. However, the inevitability of such disasters renders tears and clamorous lamentation not only futile but puerile and vulgar as well. My mother has secured exactly what she most desired—complete oblivion and non-existence,—so that grief must needs be for oneself rather than for her. I am as active as possible—quite so in amateurdom—and externally appear as usual; since I never display emotion, but prefer to be calm or slightly satirical. For some time I was unable to dress or be about—the shock affected my throat and motor nerves so that I could not eat much, or stand and walk with ease; but even then I was free from all emotional displays. As I continued to stagnate in dressing-gown and slippers—increasingly active with the pen, but inert physically—my aunts endeavoured to arouse me to some variation of the indoor monotony, and insisted that I respond to an invitation which I had received a month before, to visit an exceedingly learned and brilliant new United member—Miss M. A. Little, A. B., A. M., a former college professor now starting as a professional author—in Hampstead, N. H., near Haverhill, Mass. This I finally did, as you already know from the postcard mailed at the latter place.

On Thursday came the Smith call. I had intended to stop there alone on my return trip, but Miss Little was so much interested in the genial Grovelandite as revealed in his paper that she wished to go also. We found him in his little *Tryout* office behind the house, cordial and hospitable, and eagerly awaiting the visit which my card had heralded. He has, I am sure, been utterly misrepresented in the matter of hospitality; for never have I received a more hearty, genuine, and spontaneous welcome. He was sorry we could not stay longer, and made both Miss L.

and me promise to visit him sometime when we could stay all day and eat a dinner of his cooking—he prides himself on his skill as an amateur chef. Smith is a lean, wiry man of medium stature and good features, with a short iron-grey full beard, a good head of iron-grey hair, and a bronzed weather-beaten complexion gained by his outdoor programme. He wears old clothes—which sit neatly and quaintly on his active frame—and has a pleasant voice with a somewhat rural accent. His deafness is no obstacle to conversation if one speaks incisively and near his ear. He confesses to 69 years, but does not look a day over 50. In person he bears out every impression which one gains from the *Tryout*—I like him immeasurably, for he is the most unspoiled, simple, contented, artless, and altogether delightful small boy of his age that I have ever beheld. He never grew up, but lives on without any of the dull complexities of adulthood—active, busy with his little press, stamp album, cat, and woodland excursions—in short, a perfect old Damaetas whom Theocritus would have loved to delineate. Let none tell me hereafter that my Georgian pastorals are not true to life; for I have with mine own eyes seen happy Tityrus in his beechen shade. Smith says he wants to leave me all his old amateur papers, but I tell him he must live on for ever, like the kindly, gracious old faun that he is!

Tom, the cat, was inexcusably rude, being apparently afraid of both his visitors! After all the verse I have dedicated to him, this is a positive insult! We also saw Smith's tiny grandchild—"The Mascot"—who was less impolite, but withal of few words. *Tryout* office is a veritable curiosity shop, with all the odds and ends of forty years hung or strewn about. There are buttons, stamps, chromos, and dingy photographs on the walls, and in various corners sundry odd iron objects—a miniature anvil, for instance—washed in by the tides of the neighbouring Merrimack. My own personality was very much in evidence, since Smith was setting up my story *The Terrible Old Man,* and had Theobaldian proofs and Mss. all around. He gave me a vast pile of old *Tryouts* for recruiting work, and gave Miss Little as complete a file of back numbers as he could. She is going to bake him a loaf of gingerbread as a reward—he dilated at length upon the excellencies of one which good Mrs. K. Leyson Brown baked and sent him recently. Altogether, there is scarce anyone alive as deliciously wholesome and pastoral as the Haverhill swain. We remained two hours, and wished the sojourn might have been longer. 408 Groveland Street is a dilapidated old cottage,

but the locality is very beautiful; with woods extending up to the edge of *Tryout's* little yard and flower and vegetable garden. I believe he is really a faun, just dwelling for a while on the rim of the sylvan shades that gave him birth! As his guests departed, he presented each with some of his cherished pansies, plucked with his own hands. He told me to wear mine as a boutonniere, which I did—till out of sight of the house. I shall preserve them pressed in my *Tryout* file! On the whole, I like few persons more than honest *Tryout*. I am a rustic at heart, and he is a character escaped from one of my heroic pastorals!

Yr. most obt. Servt.
L. Theobald Junr.

80. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
July 17, 1921

My dear Mr. Long:—

I appreciate highly your expressions of sympathy regarding my recent bereavement, and am regretful to hear that your own mother has been so dangerously ill. I hope that her present improvement may prove the beginning of a complete recovery. A major bereavement has the effect of increasing one's listlessness and killing one's ambition. I cannot concertrate on any definite work, and have written nothing for aeons. One feels that there is no especial reason for doing anything when there is no one in particular to show it to. My father died when I was very young—so that he is only the vaguest of memories to me.

. . . . . Clear-cut atheism and materialism seem to me the only tenable hypotheses today. You speak of immortality as if one's personality were something apart from his material structure, yet when we analyse personality we can trace every quality to the atoms and electrons of the body. Certainly, these electrons were never thus assembled till the body in question took form; and equally certainly they will never be thus assembled again. When a man dies, his body turns to liquids and gases whose molecules soon enter into an infinitude of new combinations—there is nothing left. Haeckel has dealt so clearly with this subject in *The Riddle of the Universe* that it is really superfluous

for me to repeat the arguments here. As to free-will—like the Epicureans, whose school I followed, I used to believe in it. Now, however, I am forced to admit that there is no room for it. It is fundamentally opposed to all those laws of causality which every phenomenon of Nature confirms and verifies. Man cannot "supplement and change the forces of Nature" because he is himself but a force of Nature. It is hardly a pleasant belief, but truth was not made to please.

. . . . . If I ever acquire any kind of fortune, one of my first extravagances will be some genuine Poe autograph letters.

Most sincerely yrs.
H. P. Lovecraft

81. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

The Palace
July 30, 1921

O Sainted Prophet Iokanaan, Hail!

I heard from Mrs. Greene some time ago, and she is joining the United— as all philosophers should do. (Have you paid your own dues yet?) She spoke of reading *Nyarlathotep* and *Polaris,* but confessed that both were incomprehensible to her mind—Teutonic mysticism is too subtle for Slavs. I furnished the necessary diagrams, sent some fictional specimens of more easy comprehension, and appended some philosophical remarks which ought to be more convincing than my oral arguments because they will have to be read quietly, without opportunities for interrupting the speaker and securing the approval of the Boeotian bystanders. (In one case M. Oscar White, and in another, Charles W. Heins.) Mrs. G. has an acute, receptive, and well-stored mind; but has yet to learn that impersonal point of view which weighs evidence irrespective of its palatability. She forms a welcome addition to the United's philosophical arena, and ought to find such mental giants as A. Galpinius Secundus highly interesting.

Yr. most obedient humble Servt.,
H. von Liebkraft

82. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Stonybroke Manor, Cypherwold
Nothingham-on-Zerowe, Blankshire
11th August, 1921

The Rt. Hon. Randolph St. John, Viscount Bolinbusted /
Dear Fellow-Heartbreaker:—

However—as to these rhapsodic panegyrics of Mme. Greene's—circumstances prompt us to return them with no feigned enthusiasm! Wherefore, you ask, this rhapsodical tendency on the part of a sober Saxon patriarch devoid of emotion? I reply—the most potent of all reasons—*gold!* For be it known that the lady in question has set an enduring example for all posterity in amateurdom, and put to shame all her piker contemporaries. *Some* liberality! Upon sending in her United application, and merely after having read a few stray papers and old official organs, Mme. Greene unsolicitedly and unexpectedly came across with a pledge of FIFTY (count 'em—50!) refulgent rubles—HALF A HUNDRED scintallant simoleons—for the Official Organ Fund. Ten of 'em cash down. Oh, boy! Is that the ideal amateur spirit? We'll notify the cosmos!! Believe Grandpa, La Belle Russe won't have no reason to complain of editorial coldness—we've given her two paragraphs in the July news notes, extolling her excellencies and holding up her philanthropy as an example to our revered tightwad veterans. If a *new* member planks down fifty bucks, what ought the old ones to do? Viva Russia! God save Kerensky!

And even without the fifty, Mme. G. would be a notable addition to the United. Beneath the exterior of romantic spoofing and rhetorical extravagance she has a mind of singular scope and activity, and an exceptional background of Continental cultivation. . . .

Last Monday I had a pleasing and unusual experience—a trip of some fifteen years backward along the corridors of time; revisiting some scenes of youth, and recalling for the nonce the atmosphere of buoyant boyhood. I happened to be up in the morning—O condition most rare!—when the telephone brought to me the dulcet tones of my best childhood friend, Harold Bateman Munroe, who told me of his recent acquisition of a new camouflaged flivver and of his present de-

sire to make an excursion to Taunton and Rehoboth, covering the territory through which we used carelessly and gaily to disport in those blessed days when the daemon Time had not brought us to a prosaic maturity. It is scarce needful to remark that I accepted the invitation, and that we were soon rattling over roads by us untrod for a decade and more—roads once very familiar to the oft-punctured tires of our cycles. As we reëntered these realms of our 'teens, the years imperceptibly dropt away from us; so that we were soon boys of 16 or 17 once more. Much had changed—saplings had grown to trees, red houses had been painted white, an old mill had tumbled down, and many verdant meads had become defaced by the sties and shovels of Italians and Portugese—yet more was still unchanged; so that our quest of our lost youth was by no means without reward or realisation. The climax came when we sought the ruins of our old "country clubhouse" on Great Meadow Hill, and to our delighted amazement found *the whole lowly and tar-papered edifice intact!!!* The locality was changed in aspect—a second growth of timber had sprung up, ensconcing the cabin in a cosy maple grove—but all the change was for the better, and the old place seemed as a gem in a fairer setting. Nothing was gone—not a stone displaced in the massive chimney which a good old Civil War Veteran (now dead) helped us build with rock filched from neighbouring stone walls. Once more we stood at childhood's shrine, hardly realising that our locks were besprinkled with grey.

Reminiscently and patriarchally yours,
Lothario Honeycomb, 13th Earl of Stonybroke

83. TO ANNIE E. PHILLIPS GAMWELL

598 Angell
8/19/21

Dear Aunt Annie:—

. . . . Less geographically extended & socially diverse, yet fuller by far on reminiscent magic, was another excursion of a week & two days before; in which the star figure was none other than the best friend of my youth—Deputy Sheriff Harold Bateman Munroe! On Monday, August 8, as I was splashing in the tub at 9:30 a. m. after a long & op-

portune sleep on the top of my downy resting-place, a telephone call arrived from H. B. M. Not for anyone else would I have left the genial billows of my artificial sea, but HBM is HBM—so I made haste to answer as soon as possible. Nor was my fraternal devotion without its reward! The call was nothing less than an invitation to renew for a day's span that lost & happy youth of fifteen years ago, & to traverse in HBM's new camouflaged Ford—purchased last April—those rural Massachusetts byways about which we gaily & carelessly disported when we were young men. It seems that HBM had some business to do in Taunton—soliciting orders for Brown Bros.—& had decided to make the trip a social & retrospective event as well. I dressed as quickly as possible, & did not force HBM to wait long when he arrived in his new but humble machine. He is the same old Harold—just as he used to fit his bicycle up with all accessories, cyclometer, horn, luggage rack, &c, so has he now equipped his Ford with every conceivable device & improvement, bringing the total cost up to $675.00. He has a self-starter, speedometer, &c &c &c—making the flivver typically Munrovian. We first went to his new East Providence home—which is exceedingly attractive—& there he had to take on as a passenger an elderly cousin of his wife's, who was going on a visit to Taunton. This lady, however, was admirably quiet & unobtrusive; so that as we sped out along the Taunton Pike through remembered scenes, exchanging anecdotes & reminiscences as old men will, we quite forgot that there was anyone in the seat behind. The old pike had changed very little. True, there were some ugly new hovels of Italians & Portugese . . . . , & some of the old farmhouses were re-painted. Also—an old mill about which we used to play has tumbled down with wormy decrepitude. Yet the spirit of the antique fields & groves is changeless, & as we viewed the familiar stone walls & peasant cottages we were transported back to those far, dim days when we last gazed upon them. Rehoboth Village dreams on as of old in the immutable & perpetual twilight of its hoary arching oaks. Not a shingle on any house seems to have changed since the Revolutionary War—for in so drowsy a place the very process of repair & replacement is vague & imperceptible. Finally we reached Taunton, where all was as of old. Taunton is a sort of enlarged edition of Rehoboth Village, with nothing new or altered. Whilst a few features may have changed since the Revolution, I fancy that the Civil War found its cobbled streets & low buildings stone for stone & brick as they are today. Still—there is a modern dee-po built in 1865, the last year of

the war, a Soldier's Monument having the aesthetic—or unaesthetic!—earmarks of the 'seventies, & a courthouse whose modernity is absolutely obtrusive—1884!! Much time was wasted in Taunton over the inessential trivialities of mere bourgeois trade—Harold stopped at several factories, including the extensive Whittenton Mills north of the town, but secured only one small order—and further waste was made by a needless stop at a cafeteria for nourishment—HBM is the same old eater! But finally we left trade & Taunton behind, & rattled along the pike toward the greatest adventure of all—a pious pilgrimage to the tomb of our dead youth—Great Meadow Hill & the old clubhouse! As we undulated over the hilly macadam ribbon between the meadows we speculated upon how much we would find of the crude tar-papered edifice which we deserted eight years ago. Harold thought that only the "chimbly"—built of great stones by honest old James Kay, now dead—would be standing. I, however, believed that we would still find the walls of the *newer* part—the addition we built to the original woodman's hut, which was larger than the hut itself. Thus did we speculate as we turned from the pike into the narrow rutted road at Wheeler's Corners, jogging over the indescribable washouts & hummocks that used to force us to dismount in the old cycling days. The new-cut forest of 1909, which gave us a vast horizon & panorama when we discovered the spot, had now grown up again; & tall young mapletrees & tangles of underbrush now enshrouded the site of the clubhouse. Through the foliage we saw the antique "chimbly" (that was James Kay's pronunciation!), & thrilled at the thought that at least one memorial of the old times remained—a sort of monument or headstone to our buried youth & hopes. Then through an opening in the new-grown trees we beheld the long-deserted spot in full—and lo! upon our eyes dawned the one sight that neither of us had dared expect—*the old Great Meadow Country Clubhouse intact, in all the solid perfection of the old days!* We drew near, looked long, & tried the door. Aside from a broken lock, all was as ever, for in drowsy Rehoboth even relentless Time sometimes nods & lets a few years slip away undevastatingly. There had been no decay, nor even vandalism. Tables stood about as of yore, pictures we knew still adorned the walls with unbroken glass. Not an inch of tar paper was ripped off, & in the cement hearth we found still embedded the small pebbles we stamped in when it was new & wet—pebbles arranged to form the initials G. M. C. C.

Nothing was lacking—save the fire, the ambition, the ebulliency of youth in ourselves; & that can never be replaced. Thus two stolid middle-aged men caught for a moment a vision of the aureate & iridescent past—caught it, & sighed for days that are no more.

On the way back—the long way over which we used to sing *Sweet Elaine, Dreaming,* & *Down in de Co'nfield*—we speculated upon the possibility of *reviving the G. M. C. C.* & holding monthly meetings with Ronald Upham & Stuart Coleman in the antique way. Harold seemed quite captivated with the idea—which he himself proposed—& I am sure that no better substitute for our departed youth could be devised. But that was a week & four days ago—so HBM has no doubt forgotten all about it now. He does not miss youth as I do. For him the dull routine of adult life is perfectly adequate—yet I would trade any two of my adult & intellectual Boston "sprees" of today for one short hour as a boy of 17 or 18 with the old "gang"—just carefree "fellers", talking, laughing & singing—or trying to sing. Verily, Grandfather Theobald is getting very old now; he nods of an evening, & babbles of the past as he sits by the fire. . . . .

It is now past midnight—and officially the 20th according to civil time. (By astronomical time it is still the 19th until the following noon.) At 9 a. m. I will be one more milepost nearer the welcome sepulchre which yawns for my gray head. 31! How I wish those numbers read backward, giving me the youth & the optimism of 13! I yet recall the happiness of Aug. 20, 1903, when I attained that age—the balmy evening in the yard at 454 under the trees with my telescope, seemingly secure in a prosperous environment, & fresh with the wonder of gazing up through space at other worlds. And my old nigger-man was leaping in & out of the shadowy bushes, occasionally deigning to let his Grandpa Theobald pick him up, put his green shining eye to the telescope, & show him the cryptical surfaces of remote planets—where for all we know the dominant denizens may be lithe, quadrupedal, sable-furred gentlemen exactly like Nigger-Man himself! . . .

I have the honour to subscribe myself as
Yr. most aff. grandfather & obt. Servt.
L. Theobald Jun.

84. TO ANNIE E. PHILLIPS GAMWELL

Hampstead, N. H.
(Westville P. O.)
Aug. 27, 1921

Dear A. E. P. G.:—

Behold! I am in your new state of New Hampshire—though not very far in it, since the Massachusetts line looms near. I arrived Thursday, called on Smith & visited the museum of Haverhill Historical Society yesterday, & will return today to the city; incidentally passing through Attleboro & Boston on the train. It is one of the best trips, without doubt, that I have yet taken; & I have even slept well.

The greatest event was the visit to the Historical Society, which is housed in a museum attached to the ancestral mansion of the director. The latter place is itself a museum—all the more interesting because it is the natural collection of a family rather than the artificial collection of an institution. The director—a Mr. Leonard Smith,—is an elderly man of vast refinement & scholarship. Yesterday was not a visiting day, but since the Littles are personally acquainted with important personages of the Society, we were allowed to go through the collection. Mr. Smith—as delightful in a patrician way as C. W. Smith is in a plebeian way—personally guided the tour, sharing his house & landscape gardens as well as the museum. On the grounds is another small house —the oldest in Haverhill—built in *1640*. It is the oldest house I have ever seen or entered.

Another new experience was picking *strawberries*—in late August. I had never before seen these well-known commodities in the process of growth.

I took with me field glasses & planisphere with the aim of observing the nocturnal sky from the "Pinnacle", but though I indeed climbed that elevation by a flashlight's flickering rays, an adverse fortune beclouded the heavens with mist ere I attained the peak! . . .

I trust that your part of New Hampshire is as pleasant as this part—which I need not describe anew, having done so last June. It is necessary only to say that the district seems as remarkable in its scenic attractiveness as in the unfailing courtesy & abounding hospitality of all its inhabitants.

With renewed expressions of gratitude,

Yr. most aff: nephew & obt: Servt.
H. P. L.

85. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Still 598
August 30, 1921

Mon cher St. Jean Baptiste:—

Your voluble friend, the generous Mme. Greene, announceth that she will be in Providence for two days at the end of the present week; and I can but hope that the lethal boredom of our archaic and provincial atmosphere may not asphyxiate her United activity altogether. It's a safe bet it won't, for just as I predicted, my boy Alfredus hath become her cherished idol; and will serve admirably as an anchor. He has told her the sad, sad story of his whole life, and his mother will be lucky if she does not kidnap him some day. Also, she hath told him that I am egotistical from reading Nietzsche—which disturbeth me not in the least. Anybody can call me anything he damn pleases if he will give fifty sinkers to the organ fund and issue a United paper as good as the *Rainbow* promises to be! It would take more than one siren to lure my chee-ild away from his own adopted Grandpa! And besides—so volatile a slav means the censure no more than the taffy. Bless her heart, if she hasn't just sent Grandpa a beauteous gift, in the form of a copy of Shaw's new play, *Back to Methuselah!* I hope she didn't think I was hinting for the amateurs to keep my library supplied when I mentioned your *Vathek* gift! But one thing Mme. Greene says quite desolates me—she avers that her fair and frivolous offspring is not to be captivated by the charms of any highbrow, not even the otherwise irresistible Bolingbroke! To think that the St. Johnly magic should fail, even in one case! Gad's blood, if any daughter of mine refused to pay homage to the graces of a Clynor, I'd disown the wench! Had I two daughters, I would have no sons-in-law but thou and Galpinius! . . .

Pestiferously thine,
Grandpa Theobald.

86. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, AND MOE)

Wednesday
August 31, 1921

On Monday, August 8, as I was splashing in the bathtub about 9 a.m., I was summoned on the telephone by my best of all boyhood friends—Harold Bateman Munroe, with whom I played joyously through long years of primary, grammar, and high school experiences or their chronological equivalents. . . . What should Harold propose but a trip through our boyhood play-scenes—East Providence, Seekonk, and Rehoboth—in his camouflaged Ford! . . . Our ride took us to sleepy Taunton, a city unchanged since the forties, where a boy who had run away to Civil War might return and find nothing strange save the trolleys on the old horse cars. And as we returned, we resolved to visit the most sacred shrine of all, that spot on Great Meadow Hill where we had made a clubhouse by enlarging an old wood-cutter's shanty, and where we had for years assembled for rites of juvenile fellowship. . . . Our youth came again upon us a flame. For there amidst the growing trees in awkward grace stood the symbol of our old days in wonted wholeness—*the boyhood clubhouse, erect in its tar-papered grotesqueness, and intact in every part through all the years!!* There was neither vandalism nor decay—the lock was gone, but that was all. Even the old pictures hung on the walls of this haunted place; this little world of the past, where even Time had eased his scourging in the absence of any human audience. What shadowy companies, moreover, could we picture about the grey cement hearth where the pebbled initials G. M. C. C. still lay fixed as we had stamped them when it was new and wet! We seemed to see the old gang as it was—Ron, and Ken, and Stuart, with the fresh faces and clear eyes of youth. They are not dead, but the boy in them is dead, so that their ghosts appear only in this silent and forgotten place. And as we gazed about, Harold conceived the idea of regaining for brief snatches the youth that we have lost. If all goes well, we shall refit this house of miraculous preservation, and bring back to it the men who were once the old gang; and perhaps on some nights in the golden autumn when the logs burn red in the stone fireplace the ghosts may pass back into the aging bodies to which they belonged of old, and the gang will live once again. And

perhaps we shall sing in the olden way, and teach the birds of autumn the songs known to the birds of other autumns, and awake the old trees to memories of strains that stirred leaves now fallen. . . .

Valete—
LO.

87. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, AND MOE)

Friday
Sept. 12, 1921

. . . . . At about 6 a. m. yesterday morning, as I was concluding an all-night literary session at my desk, I stopped in the kitchen to secure my solitary second meal. Perhaps you know that I am a singularly light eater, taking but one full meal and one self-prepared cracker-and-milk lunch each day. . . . I seemed to hear a sort of crackling sound, and saw a fine grey dust gathering. Before I could rouse my sleepy head to connected thought, something else happened to the aforementioned cranium—or suddenly and without further warning the roof of the cosmos busted up and fell on poor Grandpa!! . . . It knocked me flat down against the table, burying me and the latter in one indistinguishable heap of lava and scoriac chaos. Were I not possessed of a record-breaking shock of hair, which just now needs cutting at that, the moon would be laying pale lilies of light on dead Grandpa! ! ! As it was, I sure was sanctified with dust, albeit not star-dust. To lay all mystery and symbolism aside, what really happened was this: the plastering of the ceiling had perversely loosened and fallen from a point directly above the grey head of the lone diner! It was some wreck, take it from me! The room looked like devastated Belgium as I surveyed it through the curtain of blood trickling down from my injured dome. But I managed to dig out, shake off the worst of the dust and debris, and finally free myself from the fine grains of plaster which had sifted all over me. Today I am very comfortable, relatively speaking. The wound is healing, but it sure is a thing of beauty! And soon a gang of plasterers will be at work—not on me, but on the room. . . .

Yr. most obliged and obedient Servant,
HENRY PAGET-LOWE

88. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Abode of Misery
21 September, 1921

Querido San Juan:—

Another business opportunity recently appearing is that afforded by St. Julian's new magazine, *Home Brew*. He wants a series of six ghastly tales to order—apparently unaware that art cannot be created to order. I doubt if any story from my pen could please the clientele of an essentially popular magazine, and have so informed the jovial publisher. However—if he will be satisfied with some frankly artificial hackwork, in no way related to my normal output, I will do my best for him. He offers five bucks per story—on publication. Rotten remuneration, but perhaps a better proposition than Bush work. Damn poverty!

As to my social programme—you have doubtless heard part of it already from Mme. Greene, whose Providence visit formed half of it. This volatile and beneficent personage arrived in Providence's sylvan shades on the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 4, obtaining Theobald Manor on the telephone and thus notifying Grandpa, who forthwith proceeded to the Crown Hotel—amateurdom's official headquarters in this village. I have been to the Crown only thrice—in 1914 to see W. B. Stoddard, in 1920 to see the incomparable St. John, and in 1921 to see Mme. G.—an amateur mission in each case. Arriving at the Crown about 3:15 p. m., I paused only to snap the fair with my V. P. Kodak, (the Brownie is still at 20 Webster!) and proceeded at once to show the quiet sights of Providence with the assurance born of practice on you and Daas. . . .

Finally #598 was reached, and the visitor was introduced to the present regent of these domains—my elder aunt. Both seemed delighted with each other, and my aunt has ever since been eloquent in her praise of Mme. G., whose ideas, speech, manner, aspect, and even attire impressed her with the greatest of favourableness. In truth, this visit has materially heightened my aunt's respect for amateurdom—an institution whose extreme democracy and occasional heterogeneity have

at times made it necessary for me to apologise for it. . . . At length the meeting adjourned, and Mme. G. generously invited both my aunt and myself to dinner at the Crown. Having had a noon meal, (we eat but twice daily) we were not ready for another; so my aunt had to decline, whilst I went along and consumed only a cup of coffee and portion of chocolate ice-cream. Mme. G., who is surely a full-fledged Hikawauka, again spurned the aid of the St. ry. co., and preferred to make the return trip another scenic walk. This time I showed her the southern and really antique residential district where I took you, though preceding the display with a glimpse of the neo-Colonial Orchard Avenue, where we photographed each other in 1919. Mme. G. seemed to like the antique and solemn hush of the venerable streets, and the Georgian dignity of the old mansions on Power Street—including the Brown residence where Gen. Washington was entertained in August 1790. She also liked the cloistral hush of the Brown University campus, especially the inner quadrangle; where in the deserted twilight there seemed to brood the spirit of the dead generations. Thereafter a descent of College Hill was made, and the visitor did not fail to grasp the sensation of anticlimax involved in the abrupt transition from the ancient to the garishly modern. The soul of Providence broods upon the antique hill—below there is only a third-rate copy of New York. . . .

Postero die the session re-convened at the Crown at 1 p. m. with three delegates present—Mme. G. having invited both my aunt and myself thither for a noon repast. Her generosity is, in sooth, quite unbounded; bespeaking a mind deserving of the highest commendation and respect. . . . Mme. G. is certainly a person of the most admirable qualities, whose generous and kindly cast of mind is by no means feigned, and whose intelligence and devotion to art merit the sincerest approbation. The volatility incidental to a Continental and non-Aryan heritage should not blind the analytical observer to the solid work and genuine cultivation which underlie it. This amiable and philanthropic personage is certainly due to make the greatest stir in amateurdom of any recent recruit; for unlike the majority, she takes the institution seriously enough to put real cash into it, and (so far) sees in its activities an actual branch of intellectual and aesthetic endeavour. Her latest idea is to have a sort of convention of freaks and

exotics in New York during the holidays; inviting for two weeks such provincial sages as Loveman, The Chee-ild, and poor Grandpa Theobald! Only a sincere enthusiast could thus think of uprooting such outland fixtures from their respective native heaths! The practicability of such an enterprise may well be questioned—the fare from Appleton or Madison to N. Y. must be a young fortune—but if it could occur it would certainly be some convention! Damn me if I wouldn't give ten years of my declining life to see that little divvle Alfredus; to gaze one moment upon the flower-like face of my chee-ild, from whom the woild has crooly kep' me apart all these long y'ars! If the Kid should really come, I'd get to N. Y. if I had to go on foot and return in an ambulance! . . .

Refinedly and colourfully yours,
Squire Western

89. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

598 Angell St.
Providence, Rhode Island
Oct. 3, 1921

Dear National Chairman:—

But this is not all of my industrial activity! I am now a professional fiction writer—albeit in a very limited sense. The vociferous George Julian Houtain has attempted to found a piquant professional monthly—25¢ per copy. $2.50 per year—with the alluring title of *Home Brew*; and for this ambitious venture he has demanded of me a series of six gruesome tales, all with the same central character, at the munificent price of $5.00 each! At first I refused; for fiction written to order is not art, whilst any *series* involves forcing and repetition of the most unclassical sort. But upon the insistence of the jovial editor I have given in, and have embarked upon a most hideous succession of yarns and narratives bearing the generic caption *Herbert West—Reanimator*. Houtain said, "You can't make them too morbid," and I have taken him at his word! The two already finished are entitled respectively *From the Dark* and *The Plague Demon*. Of the success of the magazine I have substantial doubts, but if it does succeed I shall have excellent opportunities for acquiring a reputation for sinister diabolism!

The human sub-treasury, Mrs. Sonia H. Greene of Ukrainia, Muscovy, and Brooklyn, was in Providence Sept. 4 and 5, and exhibited the most explosive interest in the United. Allowing for the emotional extravagance of the Slavonic temperament, Mrs. G. is really a person of the greatest refinement and keenest intelligence; and my aunt became positively lyrical in her praise. You have probably seen Mrs. G.'s paper *The Rainbow*—ere this. . . . Mrs. G. is an agnostic and anti-religionist, as you may observe in *The Rainbow;* but is too Russian and emotional to share the biting cynicism of Galpin and myself. In amateurdom she will prove a valuable fighter on the side of pure literature as opposed to pallid Woodbeeism. She has a plan of convoking a sort of convention of artists, pagans, and philosophers in New York during the last week in December and the first week in January; and has invited Galpin, Loveman, and myself to be present. If that child Galpinius actually goes, I will be there if I have to go on foot and return in an ambulance—for sight of him is something positively not to be missed! Otherwise, it is a question whether my traditional seclusion would not triumph over my more recent tendency to make brief observations of the circumambient world. My aunt, though, urges me to go.

Yr. most obt. Servt.
HPLovecraft

90. THE GALLOMO (TO GALPIN, LOVECRAFT, MOE)

Providence, R. I.
October 6, 1921

. . . . . It is not improbable that all art is merely an unsatisfactory substitute for physical supremacy; the imaginative gratification of that will to power which is frustrated in the objective attainment of its objects. It may be that the finest work of the aesthetick fancy is but a poor makeshift for the victory of one vigorous tribe or individual over another. Were I stronger, I might have gone to West Point, adopted a

martial career, and found in war a supreme delight which scribbling can but faintly adumbrate. At heart I believe I despise the aesthete and prefer the warrior—I am essentially a Teuton and barbarian; a Xanthochroic Nordic from the damp forests of Germany or Scandinavia, and kin to the giant chalk-white conquerors of the cursed, effeminate Celts. I am a son of Odin and brother to Hengist and Horsa . . . Grrr . . . Give me a drink of hot blood with a Celtic foe's skull as a beaker! Rule, Britannia . . . GOD SAVE THE KING!

. . . . . The cosmos is a mindless vortex; a seething ocean of blind forces, in which the greatest joy is unconsciousness and the greatest pain realisation. It is useless to point to the trivial pleasures of existence as justification for the numberless pains thereof—that they are truly pleasures, none disputes; yet how fleeting and how satiating! It is my present conviction that one must be either a downright pessimist or a complete dupe of mythology and religious delusion. Real extasies exist only in the fancies of the poets and priests. But after all, how absurdly trivial is the whole controversy on pleasure and pain—for what does it matter whether we suffer or not? Our feelings are the most trivial of incidents in the unending cycle of existence.

Concerning materialism, I believe that all ultra-modern objections to it arise from mere reaction and confusion in nomenclature. The resolving of the atom is interesting, and to chemical and physical science quite revolutionary, but that it constitutes any affirmation for the silly idea of permanent cosmic evolution in one direction, or for the notion of human personality as something apart from physical organisation, is quite unthinkable and certainly unwarranted by the least particle of genuine evidence. It is not for the philosopher to quibble over the exact definitions of matter and energy, or their possible identification. The minutiae of the operation of the blind infinite vortex are quite immaterial. Vitalism is a pleasing fad, but it cannot overcome the evidence for determinism or establish so absurd a doctrine as one-direction progress in an eternal universe. . . .

Well s'long,
H. PAGET-LOWE

91. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

The Rectory
7th October, 1721

Revered St. John:—

I know not if Mr. Houtain hath told you, that I am become a Grub-Street hack for him; composing at his request a series of six daemoniack tales with the same hero, for his proposed new professional magazine. So far I have writ two, *From the Dark*, and *The Plague-Daemone;* the whole set being intituled *Herbert West—Reanimator*. In this enforced, laboured, and artificial sort of composition there is nothing of art or natural gracefulness; for of necessity there must be a superfluity of strainings and repetitions in order to make each history compleat. My sole inducement is the monetary reward, which is a guinea per tale—a lowness of price shewing that the breezy St. Julian can drive as hard a bargain as Osborn or Curll, though with an infinitely greater deal of honour. I sent my fictions nearly a week ago, yet have heard nothing from them as yet. If they be unacceptable, I shall have laboured nearly in vain; for they are of insufficient merit for amateur use, though the last hath a plot which might be rewritten to some advantage in another hour and mood.

Believe me, yr. most faithful and devoted Servt.
L:Theobald Junr.

92. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R. I.
Oct. 8, 1921

My dear Mr. Long:—

My delay in replying to your greatly appreciated letter of Aug. 17 is excusable only because of a pressure of professional revision which has disrupted my whole amateur programme. At present I ought to be at

work on the fearsomely belated September *United Amateur*, but am having to take a vacation today because of a most infernal headache. Added to my verse revision work has been the new labour of professional or semi-professional fictional composition. Our mutual friend George Julian Houtain has just embarked on a professional magazine venture, founding a piquant monthly to be called *Home Brew* and to sell at 25¢ per copy. $2.50 per year. For this periodical he wishes me to write a series of gruesome tales at $5.00 each —a series of at least six, with the same central character running through. Now this is manifestly inartistic. To write to order, and to drag one figure through a series of artificial episodes, involves the violation of all that spontaneity and singleness of impression which should characterise short story work. It reduces the unhappy author from art to the commonplace level of mechanical and unimaginative back-work. Nevertheless, when one needs the money one is not scrupulous—so I have accepted the job! So far I have ground out two of the series, waiting to see whether the publication succeeds or fails before going on. I am calling the series *Herbert West-Reanimator*, since it deals with a young medical student with a penchant for revising the dead—a sort of advanced "Dr. Whitlock", if I may allude to the work of a more distinguished author! West finds his specimens in the dark of the moon with spade and lantern, and has some rather interesting adventures. The first story is entitled *From the Dark;* the second, *The Plague-Daemon*. They are not even comparable to my usual spontaneous work. I will show them to you when Samuel Loveman returns them. . . .

As to deism and materialism—I should advise you to read Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* and Hugh Elliot's *Modern Science and Materialism* before placing too much credence in any vague and unexplainable force of "life" beyond the ordinarily known mechanical forms. The human brain represents a certain pattern of considerable elaborateness and complexity, but after all there is nothing "remarkable" or "unheard of" in its superiority. We know more about it because we possess it, yet actually it is no more than a clumsy device for the redistribution of energy in a blind and purposeless cosmos. It is no more remarkable than the symmetrical forces which arrange the atoms of nebulae and planets, and preserve stellar and solar systems in their states of balanced revolutions. It seems to me that the question "what is life" is as fully answered as any other; since life is pretty clearly a well-defined

form of energy like light or electricity. The processes of vital organisation are physical and chemical, depending on the motions and reactions of molecules, atoms, and electrons; and whenever we investigate the vague claims of those vitalists, Bergsonians, and "Creative Evolutionists" who speak of the non-materiality, universality, and continuity of life, we find their conceptions basically and essentially *mythological and poetical*. They have, and can have, no clear idea of what they really mean; but derive their images from allegory and obsolete metaphysics.

Yours most sincerely,
H. P. Lovecraft

93. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

Dec. 10, 1921

Dear Head Prof:—

I notice also the disarmament propaganda, and sincerely hope that you are *not* connected with this movement! For in sober truth, this "brotherhood" stuff is hardly the sort of thing to advance when *facts* are to be faced. Adults ought to know by this time that "brotherhood", "unselfishness," "love," "sacrifice," and all the rest of the "bla-bla" are uncivilised dreams and myths. Wars will always exist, armament or no armament, because they are the one inevitable result of a certain frequently recurring arrangement of ineradicable human instincts—when a certain group wants a certain thing with sufficient intensity, it will burst through *every* restraint to get it. "World peace" is such a fallacious and unscientific illusion that I wonder anyone can entertain it. The present conference amuses me—or rather, I am amused at what the superficial masses fancy it can do. It is one of many gatherings to adjudicate important international questions, but the armament side is relatively trivial. The naval cuts may go through, but they will do nothing more than avert tax increases for the nations concerned. They will have no influence on the making of war—for that comes from deeper causes and overleaps every barrier. To hear pacifists clamour for the *abolition* of this or that—submarines or poison gas—makes me laugh. What is not done openly will be done secretly except in the case of unconcealable capital ships! If submarines and poison gas are "abolished", the

next war will find most of the nations in possession of a goodly supply of both. The nation —if any—that *does* keep faith, will be left at the mercy of the rest. And that is the reason all such pacifist wailing is silly. To disarm one nation or group will avert no evil, but will merely create the greater evil of delivering it as a prey to shrewder and less scrupulous alien forces.

The next war will probably be between England, France, and America on the one hand, and Germany, Japan, and Russia on the other. Of the potential enemy, only one nation is a member of the conference. Germany is finding innumerable ways to remain strong save as a sea-power, Russia has the most terrible army of human wolves in existence, and Japan will break faith in every way possible. Let facts be faced before the ignorant and unqualified masses try to adjudicate problems which are difficult enough for trained statesmen!

But this is not to say that warfare is not becoming a menace in view of destructive invention. All that is sadly sure—and the next war will probably end civilisation, or start the ultimate ending. The point is, that good or bad the thing cannot be helped any more than the winter which kills the summer, or the earthquakes, the waterspouts, and the tidal waves. We live in a decadent age like that of the later Roman Empire, and only the simple can find grounds to dodge the fact. . . .

Yr. most obt. subordinate,
L: Theobald Jun.

94. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

598 Angell
December 14, 1921

Venerated Viscount:–

Nyarlathotep is a nightmare—an actual phantasm of my own, with the first paragraph written *before I fully awaked*. I have been feeling execrably of late—whole weeks have passed without relief from headache and dizziness, and for a long time three hours was my utmost limit for continuous work. (I seem better now.) Added to my steady ills was an unaccustomed ocular trouble which prevented me from reading fine print—a curious tugging of nerves and muscles which

rather startled me during the weeks it persisted. Amidst this gloom came the nightmare of nightmares—the most realistic and horrible I have experienced since the age of ten—whose stark hideousness and ghastly appressiveness I could but feebly mirror in my written phantasy. . . . The first phase was a general sense of undefined apprehension—vague terror which appeared universal. I seemed to be seated in my chair clad in my old grey dressing-gown, reading a letter from Samuel Loveman. The letter was unbelievably realistic—thin, 8½ × 13 paper, violet ink signature, and all—and its contents seemed portentous. The dream-Loveman wrote:

> "Don't fail to see Nyarlathotep if he comes to Providence. He is horrible—horrible beyond anything you can imagine—but wonderful. He haunts one for hours afterward. I am still shuddering at what he showed."

I had never heard the name NYARLATHOTEP before, but seemed to understand the allusion. Nyarlathotep was a kind of itinerant showman or lecturer who held forth in publick halls and aroused widespread fear and discussion with his exhibitions. These exhibitions consisted of two parts—first, a horrible—possibly prophetic—cinema reel; and later some extraordinary experiments with scientific and electrical apparatus. As I received the letter, I seemed to recall that Nyarlathotep was already in Providence; and that he was the cause of the shocking fear which brooded over all the people. I seemed to remember that persons had whispered to me in awe of his horrors, and warned me not to go near him. But Loveman's dream-letter decided me, and I began to dress for a trip down town to see Nyarlathotep. The details are quite vivid—I had trouble tying my cravat—but the indescribable terror overshadowed all else. As I left the house I saw throngs of men plodding through the night, all whispering affrightedly and bound in one direction. I fell in with them, afraid yet eager to see and hear the great, the obscure, the unutterable Nyarlathotep. After that the dream followed the course of the enclosed story almost exactly, save that it did not go quite so far. It ended a moment after I was drawn into the black yawning abyss between the snows, and whirled tempestuously about in a vortex with shadows that once were men! I added the macabre conclusion for the sake of climactic effect and literary finish. As I was drawn into the abyss I emitted a resounding shriek (I thought it must have been audible, but my aunt says it was not) and the picture ceased. I

was in great pain—forehead pounding and ears ringing—but I had only one automatic impulse—to *write*, and preserve the atmosphere of unparallelled fright; and before I knew it I had pulled on the light and was scribbling desperately. Of what I was writing I had very little idea, and after a time I desisted and bathed my head. When fully awake I remembered all the incidents but had lost the exquisite thrill of fear—the actual sensation of the presence of the hideout unknown. Looking at what I had written I was astonished by its coherence. It comprises the first paragraph of the enclosed manuscript, only three words having been changed. I wish I could have continued in the same subconscious state, for although I went on immediately, the primal thrill was lost, and the terror had become a matter of conscious artistic creation. . . .

The other piece—*Celephais*—weaves together a large number of my recent dreams on a thread of pathos. It is the first non-horror story I have written since *The White Ship*. The remaining three are not of the fantastic but of the realistically gruesome type—the last, which I finished day before yesterday, being rather unique. I am wondering what Loveman will think of it. The title is *The Picture in the House*, and it hinges on a very old engraving by the brothers DeBry—Plate XII of Pigafetta's *Regnum Congo*, printed in Frankfort in 1598. Please be sure to return the enclosed manuscripts—they are the original typed copies which will go to the publisher if I can find such a person. I suppose it is absurd for me to try to write, since there is no demand for my work, yet the pleasure is in the creation of the images, and I could not help scribbling if I wished.

Yr. most Obt. Servt.
L:Theobald Junr.

95. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Prof. Dr. Maritz Viuter Moli,
University of Viskonsin,
Milwaukee, Nova Germania.

Hey, Mowruss, ol' Sport!

Kidlet and I have discovered a poet as great as Loveman—indeed, Alfredus says he's greater, and calls him the greatest living poet of

America. I allude to Loveman's California friend Clark Ashton Smith, about whose hideous sketches and water-colours I think we wrote you from Cleveland. Smith is an American Baudelaire—master of ghoulish worlds no other foot ever trod. I own both his published books, and shall purchase his third this fall when it appears. . . . Here's a typical Ashtonsmithic sonnet—

THE REFUGE OF BEAUTY
by Clark Ashton Smith

From regions of the sun's half-dreamt decay,
All day the cruel rain strikes darkly down;
And from the night thy fatal stars shall frown—
Beauty, wilt thou abide this night and day?
Roofless, at portals dark and desperate,
Wilt thou a shelter unrefus'd implore,
And, past the tomb's too-hospitable door,
Evade thy lover in eluding Hate?

Alas, for what have I to offer thee?
Chill halls of mind, dank rooms of memory,
Where thou shalt dwell with woes and thoughts infirm;
This rumor-throng'd citadel of sense.
Trembling before some nameless imminence:
And fellow-questship with the glutless Worm.

If that ain't supreme poesy, I'm a damned liar! . . .

Just now Belknap, Alfredus, and I are amusing ourselves with a series of mutual hoaxes—which we do not take too seriously. Last month Belknap and I concocted an account of an 125-year-old hermit from Maine, who had in his possession an undiscover'd poem of Poe's. I wrote the "poem"; and although Kidlet didn't swallow the Poe yarn, he praised the verses to the skies in an analytical critique, assuming that we had cribbed it from some standard barb!!!! When we put him wise to the fact that it was written at Long's house, amidst gusts of merriment, by the very old Theobald whose verse he so cordially despises, he began to see defects! And yet he had spoken so eloquently of its "sincerity"!!! One on Galba this time. And here's the spasm:

TO ZARA

By Edgar Allan Poe (?)
Inscribed to Miss Sarah Longhurst—June 1829.

I look'd upon thee yesternight
Beneath the drops of yellow light
That fell from out a poppy moon
Like notes of some far opiate tune.
I look'd and sigh'd, I knew not why,
As when a condor flutters by,
And thought the moonbeams on thy face
Tim'd to seek thy resting-place.
O Sacred spot! Memorial bow'r!
Unsuited to the mocking hour
When winds of myrrh from Tempe's Cake
Stir soft, yet stir thee not awake!
Thy clear brow, Zara, rests so fair,
I cannot think Death lingers there;
Thy lip, as from thy blood, is red,
Nor hints of ichors of the dead:
Canst thou, whom love so late consum'd,
Lie prey to worms—dissolv'd, entomb'd?
And he, whose name suffus'd thy cheek
With ecstasies thou couldst not speak;
Will he in fancy hold thee ever
Fair as thou art, decaying never,
And dreaming, on thine eyelids press
A tribute to thy loveliness?
Or will his fancy rove beneath
The carven urn and chisell'd wreath,
Where still—so still—the shroud shall drape
Grotesque, liquescent turns of shape?
No, Zara, no! Such beauty reigns
Immortal in immortal fanes;
Radiant for ever, ever laden
With beams of uncorrupted Aidenn,
And naught that slumbers here tonight
Can perish from a lover's sight.

Where'er thy soul, whe'er thy clay
May rise to hail another day,
Thy second soul, thy beauty's fame,
The songs of passionate lutes shall claim;
Pale, lovely ghost—so young, so fair,
To flutter in sepulchral air—
To flutter where the taper dies
Amidst a mourner's choking sighs!

With every good wish, believe me, Sir,
Yr. most obt. Servt.
Theobaldus

96. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Jany. 15, 1922

Valued Bolingbroke:—

I yesterday receiv'd the first number of *Home Brew,* and am doing as well as can be expected. Misery loves company, and I have at least some sorry consolation in the companionship of yourself and Morton amidst the arid waste of ochreous commercialism. Like the painted punks in your dancing dactyls, the Muses have sold themselves for a golden guinea. . . .

Yr. most hble., most obt. Servt.
L: Theobald, Junr.

97. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

My dear Mr. Long:—

Feby. 8, 1922

From my silence you might well fancy that I had duplicated your ordeal of illness, but such is hardly the literal truth. My afflictions have been a series of persistent and prostrating colds, a nervous tension ap-

proaching but not quite attaining the state of a real breakdown, and labour in quantities so oppressive and overwhelming that I have given up all hope of rectifying my schedule or securing any literary leisure. I have indeed, had to share my toil with two others—unloading superfluous revision upon the sympathetic shoulders of Samuel Loveman and James F. Morton, Jr. . . .

As an admirer of Verlaine and Baudelaire, you may enjoy looking over the enclosed translations by our scintillant fellow-amateur Samuel Loveman. (To be returned ultimately to me.) In my opinion they are strikingly excellent—Loveman himself is a romantic figure, about whose poverty, sufferings, genius, and divine melancholy one might write a moving volume. He is today almost destitute—has been forced to sell some of his treasured books, including rare incunabulae extending back to 1482—yet will not accept the loan of a farthing. He is one step in advance of his beloved vagabonds and bohemians—for he has pride, honour, and character. A glorious pagan—and a Jew by race. I plan to do what I can to immortalise him in the "Loveman Issue" of the *United Amateur*, which I shall send to sundry celebrities. . . .

I never *try* to write a story, but wait till a story *has to be* written. It was thus with *Nyarlathotep* and *Randolph Carter*, which I *dreamed*. When I set to work deliberately to fashion a tale, the result is cheap and flat. I think I told you of the series I am writing for Houtain's *Home Brew*. (All series are inartistic, since they involve tedious repetitions, and weak stretching out of the idea.) If you have received the opening number you will see what a miserable result I have achieved!

I enclose two stories you have not previously seen. One is the long-promised *Randolph Carter*, and the other is my latest. Please return both. The "Carter" thing is an actual dream, with Loveman and myself as characters. He is "Warren" and I am "Carter". I dreamed that we stood in a strange and terrible graveyard in a swamp, and that we bore peculiar instruments. Then we opened a grave—and the things told in the story happened. I woke up transfixed with terror, and immediately wrote the story. That was in December 1919. *Randolph Carter* is called by practically all amateurs my best story. Certainly, it has the most hideous suspense and surging terror of anything I have evolved. *Erich Zann* I wrote only recently. It has horror—the horror of the grotesque and visionary—but it does not "grip" like *Randolph Carter*. It is not,

as a whole, a dream, though I have dreamt of steep streets like the Rue d' Auseil.

Most sincerely yours,
H. P. Lovecraft

98. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Will's Coffee-House
March 12, 1722

Cherish'd Bolingbroke:—

. . . . . I have lately completed the fourth of the West tales, entituled *The Scream of the Dead*, and form'd a synopsis of the fifth, to be call'd *The Horror from the Shadows*. I shall be glad when the burthen of this hack labour is removed from my back. . . .

Ever yr. l'dship's most devoted, most faithful Servt.
L: Theobald Junr.

99. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Twickenham
Apr. 15, 1722

Benignant Bolingbroke:—

Your conjecture regarding my somnolent pursuits was form'd with equal shrewdness and accuracy. Having quit the metropolis Wesnesday morning, on a coach leaving the Grand Central Tavern at half past eight, I was wholly wrapt in sleep till we reach'd the Union Tavern in Providence; tho' I have a few vague impressions of wayside inns, and of changing horses at Stamford, in the Connecticut-Colony. The remainder of Wednesday is hazy in my recollection, but at 11 p. m. I retir'd to bed, where I enjoy'd an unbroken sleep of 23 hours; arising at 10 p. m. Thursday. After that I attempted with indifferent success to cope with accumulated mail—22 letters, 5 packages, and 2 papers—and to read the file of the *Evening Bulletin* which had accumulated during

my absence. At some hour to me unknown I laps'd gently into a slumber in my chair; later unconsciously transferring my bulk to the couch, where I slept till 1:30 p. m. Friday. Friday afternoon I sought to redeem some of my promises in letter-writing, but with ill success. Friday night I retir'd at 11 p. m., sleeping till 2 p. m. this afternoon. Now I am amongst the living once more, and much enlivened by your vivid and agreeable communication. Altogether, the journey was an event of the keenest pleasure and greatest singularity. Not for the wealth of Peru wou'd I have miss'd it, and when I consider the fatigue incident upon former travels, I am impress'd with my relative immunity from ill effects.

Concerning the personality of S: Loveman, Esq., I believe you are right in assuming that he seeks to cover his aesthetick predilections with a masque of the commonplace. In externals, it may be said that he succeeds to no mean extent; but the penetrating vision is not slow to discover the sensitive artist beneath his worldly robes. Perhaps I had a particular advantage in the making of such discoveries, since I had the honour of his company for a full day amidst the classical reliquiae of the Metropolitan Museum, where we cast aside the centuries and revell'd in antique visions that bore us through the tombs of AEgyptus, the Academes of Hellas, and the Forum and Temples of ROMA. CAPVT. MVNDI. In such an artistick paradise the need for protective colouring departs, and one may exhibit his appreciation of beauty without fear of the ridicule of the vulgar and stupid. The underlying sensitiveness of our colleague was many times display'd during our sojourn, largely in connexion with apprehensions regarding the impression he produced upon others. He was at great pains to inquire how well he fulfill'd my expectations of him, and was a whole day miserable because of the seeming indifference of young Long; who in truth, however, entertain'd the most ardent regard and admiration for him. Loveman undoubtedly suffers very keenly from small things which scarce perturb the generality of mankind. He is not sufficiently a cynick, and is made timid by situations which have no effect at all upon me, who am contemptuous of all men and things. It is this sensitive desire to escape comment which impels him to adopt the disguise of commonplace demeanour—a disguise which I am myself adopting to an increasing degree, tho' I do it not from sensitiveness but from cynicism and contempt of pretence. . . .

. . . . . For mine own part, I think I overdid not at all, from the point of view of safety, for my physical condition steadily improves from year to year.

Yr. l'dship's most oblig'd,
Most obt. Servt,
L: Theobald Jun.

100. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

598 Angell St.
Providence, R.I.
April 18, 1922

My dear F. Belknap:—

I had intended writing much sooner, but upon reaching home found myself confronted with a peculiarly baffling combination of obstacles—a fatigue and reaction making prolonged sleeping periods necessary, and a record-breaking stack of accumulated work partially symbolised by the contents of the mail-box; 22 letters, 5 packages, and 2 papers! Only now am I beginning to pull myself together for a return to "normalcy"—this being the first epistle of any length which I have attempted.

It is needless to say how delighted I was to meet you in person, or how keenly I enjoyed and appreciated the delightful hospitality extended by your household. Indeed, I may truthfully say that no other single incident forms so pleasing a memory of my unexpected and inspiring first trip to the metropolis. Loveman also found the House of Long delightful, and I hope that you will keep permanently in touch with him.

* * * * *

I can always sympathise with illness, for my life has been a nightmare of nerves. Physically I have seemed to improve from year to year, but I have no power of endurance—the recent trip has practically laid me up for a week. Paradoxically, I have an outward appearance of health which probably alienates much sympathy from me—perhaps some day I shall be able to live up to this exterior and really be vigorous! I weigh so much I dare not mount a pair of scales—I loathe a fat

man, yet seem to be developing into one with disconcerting rapidity! The fat face in that Brooklyn snap shot—the first I have had since September—positively sickens me!

Most sincerely yours,
H. P. L.

101. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

May 3, 1922

My dear F. B. L:—

Among amateurs the typewriter is a favourite instrument of correspondence—and in the late lamented Gallomo circle it was absolutely essential, since each of the triad, Moe, Galpin, H. P. L., sent everything in duplicate to the other two; making carbon copies needful. . . . Speaking of circles, I like your idea of a new Long—Loveman-Galpin-Lovecraft inner circle in amateurdom, and think I shall propose it to the sages of Cleveland and Madison. It would probably follow the general lines of the old *Kleicomolo,* which was not duplicated but passed around. Each time it reached a member of the quartette (finally enlarged to a quintette) he took out his old section and inserted a new one. Sections were sometimes very long—extending to 22 typed pages, single spacing! The original "gang" was KLEIner, COle, MOe, and LOvecraft. Ira A. Cole was a strange and brilliant character—an utterly illiterate ranchman and ex-cowboy of Western Kansas who possessed a streak of brilliant poetic genius. He was a sort of protegé of the more literate amateurs, and came to acquire a surprising amount of scholarship himself. His imagination was the most weird and active I have ever seen in any human being. But in the end that very streak of overdeveloped imagination and emotionalism was his aesthetic undoing. Worked upon by a hectic and freakish "Pentecostal" revivalist, he "got religion" and became an absolutely impossible fanatic in his eccentric sect. He even reached the hallucination stage—he fancied strange voices spoke gospel messages through his tongue—in languages he did not understand. He is a Pentecostal preacher and small farmer now, living in Boulder, Colorado. He is quite dead to amateur journalism—but what a meteor he was in his heyday! You may have seen bits

of his work in the older amateur papers. Moe you may know—he is a very proficient English teacher, but like Cole has recently lost some of his literary interest in religious enthusiasm. His religion, however, is of the stolid Presbyterian type. He is not erratic—but merely backward. Moe is a great scholar—a University of Wisconsin man, and a specialist in Semitic languages; he even knows Assyrian cuneiform writing!! But he was never an aesthetic genius like Cole. He has been an ideal amateur—and we all owe him a debt for discovering Galpin. Galpin was in his H. S. class 1916-18. In 1918 we admitted Galpin to the *Kleicomolo,* but did not add a syllable of his name to our title, since we were rather fond of our millifluous polysyllable just as it was. About that time Cole dropped out and Kleiner's interest began to slacken, so we soon had a brand new triangle, *The Gallomo*—GALpin, LOvecraft, and MOe. This lasted until last fall, when Moe dropped out. He had often threatened to quit before on account of his pious horror of the combined paganism of his two colleqgues. So just now the *United* has no inner circle whatever. In my opinion it is time to found one, and I believe the ideal personnel would be you and Loveman as novices and Galpin and I as *Kleicomolo* veterans. It would be a lineal descendant of the old circle which Moe founded so long ago! In selecting a name, one is struck with the preponderance of LO's—LOng, LOveman, and LOvecraft! A good name, involving a reduplicated prefix, would the THE LOLOGALLO. I suggest that you broach the matter yourself to Loveman and Galpin. The requisites for enjoyable membership in such a circle—varied literary and philosophical interests, agnosticism, discursiveness—seem to be possessed by all the potential high contracting parties. Loveman may be rather briefer than the rest, but he will never fail to be intensely interesting. . . .

I am glad you have heard from Galpin, who mentioned receiving an interesting letter and who says he likes you very much. He is a phenomenon such as one rarely meets—a perfect cynic and sophisticated intellectual, but despite all that a genuine boy full of energy and enthusiasm. He is not only a keen thinker, but provocative of thought—I believe he has influenced my own philosophical views more than any other one person. Anyone who can elicit a flourishing correspondence from him is lucky indeed, for his letters are cultural stimuli.

* * * * *

My own view toward aesthetic things has always been one of awe at the mystery of the cosmos. The dominant sensation has been a kind of ecstatic wonder at the unfathomed reaches of nighted space and the glittering jewels of nebular, solar, and planetary fire. Amidst this colossal, kaleidoscopic, undying and unbounded drama of infinite time and space, everything terrestrial and human has seemed to shrink away to insignificance. There is, to my mind, a kind of hideous irony in the assumption of the human point of view at all—in the exaltation, celebration, or even detailed notice of the contemptible organic processes of the filthy louse called man. I could not take humanity seriously if I wanted to, and it rather sickens me to see a poet's vision bound up in the trivial sensations and affairs of this crawling insect-species. To limit one's range to human things, and to look on the universe with the eyes of mankind only, seems to me pitifully absurd. I like to view the universe as an isolated cosmic intelligence outside time and space—to sympathise not only with man, but with forces opposed to man, or forces which have nothing to do with man, and do not realise that he exists. When Kleiner showed me the sky-line of New-York I told him that man is like the coral insect—designed to build vast, beautiful, mineral things for the moon to delight in after he is dead. And so to me the only poignant sensation in life is that of wonder, fascination, and terror at the unknown. My province is that dim realm where night clutches the worlds, and the things we know are shadowed by the infinity of things we can never know save in dreams. The Freudism of such decadents as Baudelaire mildly amuses me. It may be that eroticism indeed overshadows all human interests—at least, during the modern historical period—but I cannot help laughing at the claim of human interests to paramount notice when through illimitable gulfs of uncanny light and haunted darkness blow winds of ether to whose habitant winged fiends and genii the name of man—and even the name of organic life—is unknown. Decadents will argue, metaphysically, that human things must be supreme because we can perceive the universe only through human eyes and with human brains. This contention, however, is sound only on the assumption that art must be approached emotionally and sensuously, without the exercise of abstract reason as one of the factors of perception and appreciation. This assumption I emphatically dispute, as something altogether arbitrary and formalistically dogmatic. I believe that no honest aesthetic canon can exclude that highest of organic faculties—the pure, ice-cold reason; which gives man his sole contact with things outside himself, and which must be superimposed upon emotion before anything like *imagination* can be produced.

To me Poe is the apex of fantastic art—there was in him a vast and cosmic vision which no imitator has been able to parallel. It is no wonder that his work was totally devoid of the sensual, because his dominant excitant lay outside the domain of human relations altogether. His was the true awe of the atom in the presence of the infinite—the essentially *intellectual* wonder of one who looks out upon the whirling, grotesque, and unfathomable abysses which engulf the entire world, yet of which the sensually-minded are utterly unconscious. I have yet to find in Baudelaire, great as he was in the domain of the hideously imaginative, any trace of this terrible realisation of the mysteries beyond the stars. I do find it in Dunsany, though in a much weaker form, and diluted with a certain shrewd self-consciousness which Poe sublimely lacked. There may be something rather sophomoric in my intense and unalterable devotion to Poe; a devotion which has lasted for some twenty-five years without diminution; but I do not think it is so far amiss as the average ultra-modern would hasten to pronounce it. Poe was beyond anything this age can produce, and is so far America's sole contribution to the general current of world literature. He is the father of most of the redeeming features of decadent literature, and differs from the actual decadents in that they have failed to comprehend the magnificent and ultra-human point of view on which his unique creations are based. . . .

Many thanks for the words of comfort which cheer me amidst my load of increasing avoirdupois! I have just had my last season's summer suit altered to fit the new physique, and am about to waddle into a local emporium to obtain the first new suit I shall have had since the sad inflation. I wonder if the salesmen will recognize me? I am feeling wretched today—had my teeth attended to yesterday, and feel as if I had been chewing stones. . . . Last week I went to see *The Emperor Jones* by Eugene O'Neill. Have you seen it? It is a thing of terror, ably presented. O'Neill strikes me as the one real dramatist of America today—starkly tragic, and with a touch of the Poe-esque.

With every good wish, and hoping to hear from you soon, I remain

Yr. most hble. obt. & resp. Servt.
H. P.

102. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

Theobald Butcher-Shop
May 3, 1922

Dear Mrs. Renshaw:—

April 6-12 I took the most extended trip of my montonous existence, going for the first time to New York City to meet the illustrious Samuel Loveman. . . . We were guests of Mrs. Greene of *The Rainbow*, whose philanthropy went to the length of turning over her entire flat to us and stopping with a neighbour herself. Loveman is utterly delightful—refined, delicate, sensitive, and aesthetic; though he does his best to conceal his artistic predilections beneath a modest exterior of common-place good-fellowship. He read two of his unfinished masterpieces, and I cannot but pronounce him in my mature opinion the greatest poet amateur journalism has ever produced. To meet him in person was a delight I had hardly dared to expect—now I must meet that delectable little imp Galpin, and life will be complete! We were given the most agreeable hospitality by all the local amateurs, and took infinite pleasure in meeting that young wonder Frank Belknap Long, Jr., who will be one of the literary giants of the next amateur generation. Long is a slight, dark, exceedingly handsome, and altogether poetic lad of twenty. We dined twiced at his house—his parents are delightful—and in his company visited the historic Fordham cottage occupied from 1844 to 1849 by the one real literary figure of America—*Edgar Allan Poe*. Kleiner and Morton also showed us many sights, the most impressive of which was the almost dreamlike and Dunsanian city skyline as seen from Manhattan Bridge. One whole day Loveman and I roamed around the Metropolitan Museum of Art, drinking in classic beauty, and agreeing that real beauty perished utterly with the Graeco-Roman age. . . .

Yr. most obt. Servt.
L. Theobald Jun.

103. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Thursday, May 18, 1922

My dear Mo:—

On April 1, in response to Mrs. Greene's repeated inducements, Loveman had hit N. Y. in quest of a commercial situation. Finding his hostess absent, he was so depressed that he almost went home immediately; but a local friend persuaded him to wait at an hotel. April 3 Mrs. Greene reached home and found the disconsolate one on her doorstep, as it were. She succeeded in slightly cheering him up, but not in getting him a job; and by the next evening he was about to depart in tenebrous discouragement. Mrs. Greene had turned her entire flat over to him, stopping at a neighbour's herself, but not even that super-hospitality seemed likely to hold him. Then, since the bard had done me the undeserv'd honour of wishing I were there, Mrs. Greene called me up on the long-distance as an expedient for cheering her guest. You can imagine my ecstatic delight at hearing at last the actual voice of the poet I had admired for seven years—and to whom I had written commendatory verses before I knew whether he was living or dead! It was a great conversation, but I never expected to *see* the celebrity at the other end. He was resolved to go home at once! But Morton and Kleiner, with whom he was in touch, added their voices; and he decided to tarry "one more day". On the evening of the 5th I was called up by the assembled Loveman-Greene-Morton-Kleiner forces and invited to join them. The later presence of my kid protege Frank Belknap Long Jr. was promised, and Loveman said he would stay in N. Y. only on condition that I came. It was the suddenness and unexpectedness which finally turned the trick. I accepted, packed a valise, and on the following sunny morning caught the ten-six for New York.

I spent the five-hour journey reading Dunsany and peering at wayside stations. New-London is a dingy little burg—a Victorian relic. New-Haven seems alert and metropolitan from the station angle. Ditto for Bridgeport. Shortly before three p.m., the train reached the lofty and colossal Harlem River viaduct (Only by chance did I secure the unique panorama—because the train was a Washington, D. C. express. Ordinary N. Y. trains go by a tamer route and into the Grand Central Sta-

tion), and I saw for the first time the Cyclopean outlines of New-York. It was a mystical sight in the gold sun of late afternoon; a dream-thing of faint grey, outlined against a sky of faint grey smoke. City and sky were so alike that one could hardly be sure that there was a city—that the fancied towers and pinnacles were not the merest illusions.

. . . . .

The station was reached on time, and I was supposed to be met by Loveman and Mrs. Greene; but by some mishap in calculation the reception committee had become lost in the mazes of the vast terminal. I waited a while, then made a scientific search which finally unearthed Mrs. Greene. Loveman had returned to Brooklyn in discouragement! By means of subway and taxi, we beat Loveman to 259 Parkside—meeting him just as he ascended the steps. . . .

. . . . . His modesty is incredibly extreme—he has not even kept track of his own work, so that many magnificant early pieces are probably lost beyond recovery. I made him recall some, and set one down. It was exquisite—I must induce Cook to publish a book of collected Loveman poetry. The sensitiveness of Loveman is painful—his nerves and emotions are highly organised. A kind word is balm to him, and a cruel work crushes him wholly. . . .

Loveman read me his unfinished masterpieces, *The Hermaphrodite* and *The Sphinx*. . . . Loveman makes language a thing of music, line, colour—*The Hermaphrodite* is a frieze, and *The Sphinx* is a poisonous flower grown in Syrian marshes where the Orontes winds down to the sea from Antioch.

To resume the history of the voyage—after a long Lovemanico-Theobaldian session, during which I read my latest hell-beater *Hypnos* and received the flattering verdict that it's the best thing I ever wrote; Mrs. Greene returned from town, whither she had gone unnoticed during the two-Love introductory whirl of words, and took both guests to dinner at a neighbouring refectory. Nothing as sensational as the Pfister orgy—just broiled chicken with modest concomitants which I cannot recall in Mocratic detail—but a neat and quietly tasteful meal in surroundings of the same description. . . .

After the Museum we went down to Madison Square on omnibus—as far as it went—and feet, and took a surface car (a common ornery closed car of the vintage of about 1895, just like a small town car except that it's trolley was on the bottom instead of on top, running in a slot to the Arernian caves much like the gripper of an antique cable-car) down Broadway to the tall building section. The cloud-piercers certainly present a sight fairly unique, but that was not what we went for. We were bound for 206 and George Julian Houtain. His office is a cramped dump on the ninth floor of a building which the neighbouring Woolworth tower quite dwarfs, but there was nothing cramped about G. Julian's laugh! Same old side-shaker! Loveman was a bit embarrassed, because Mrs. Greene now hates Houtain and rather resents the fact that everyone else doesn't—but Old Theobald wasted no time in worries, since a true cynick gives not a damn what anyone else thinks. If Mrs. Greene objected, she had my permission to go to hell and complain to the devil! Houtain would receive me as a guest at 1128 Bedford even if Mrs. Greene should kick me out of 259 Parkside! No damn human being, however worthy and generous, can dictate to the Old Gent whom he shall associate with!! Houtain may be a rascal in a sort of Nietzschean way, but I should worry. As an unmoralist too languid and indolent to be unmoral myself, I have to have an unmoral friend to sustain my reputation for cynical viciousness—and Houtain is the most friendly bird out of gaol! Loveman, already depressed by the snappish remark of an old fool museum attendant, (who simply made an infernal ass of himself, and at whom Loveman should merely have laughed tolerantly!) was still further depressed by the atmosphere of feudism radiating from Houtain's accounts of his clashes with various amateurs; so after a time I took him out and cheered him up at a Childs beanery. We got back to Parkside safely, and Loveman heaved a sigh of relief when he found that Mrs. Greene could amicably survive the shock of learning that we had not only been to Houtain's, but had made a dinner engagement at his house for the next evening.

Now sound the clarions and awake the drums,
For matchless *Morton* in his chariot comes!

Just as we were about 0.75 through an excellent dinner prepared by Mme. Greene, good ol' woollybean blew in to bear us off to a stupid musicale on which his honest heart was set. It was at the home of an ex-member of the United—one Adeline E. Leiser—and most of the local amateurs, including our benign hostess, were none too enthusiastic about it because they had not been invited. It didn't sound very inviting (pardon paronomasia) to Loveman and me, but we'd do damn near

anything for good old Jim. Morton is, in a sense, a pathetic figure. Always animated by a futile and quixotic idealism and determination to be true to his own convictions, he has wasted a magnificent brain on radical nonsense, squandered a vigorous life in espousal of unsound causes, and alienated most of those whose respect he really deserves through his conscientious advocacy of repellent ideas. His one paramount aesthetic desire—to express himself poetically—is frustrated by lack of the natural gift; and with his critical skill he tragically realises it. For him is none of the fatuous complacency of a Bush or a Baldwin. Now the years are creeping upon him, and he is not taken as seriously as he used to be. He is spoofed instead of combated—because he has become good-natured instead of fiery. His eccentricity, manifested in antique rubber collars, round-domed felt hats, and pouches and pockets full of handy paraphernalia, has become of that gentle, elderly sort which bespeaks the lovable "character". He is poor and lonely, and is beginning to realise how the world has passed him by—he, James Ferdinand Morton, Jr., Harvard A. B., A. M., grandson of S. F. Smith and descendant of those Mortons who were the greatest landed proprietors in the New-Towne of the Massachusetts-Bay Colonie; and for whom Morton-Street in Newton Centre was named. Blessed old duffer! he has become of late a believer in matrimony, and proposes about once a week to the ornate Mme. Greene—but alas, the fair are fickle, and now that he is getting stout and elderly he does not make much impression. After giving Mme. Greene what is probably the greatest intellectual training she ever received, he is now regarded by her with an increasing impatience which she threatens to amplify to direct vanishment. I resent such cavalier treatment of a pure Anglo-Saxon by a foreigner; but it is only the common way of all mankind—bah! . . .

Saturday was sightseeing day—and who could ask for a better guide than ours—good ol' Klei? We met—Loveman-Theobald, Mortonius, and Klei, in front of the Woolworth Building, after the two Loves had indulged in a tour of old bookstalls in Vesey-Street. (I picked up some good Poe-iana) The assembled clan's first move was up—clean up to the top of N. Y.! It costs half a ducat per rube, and is worth it. Loveman was dizzy, but your grandpa wasn't—gawd knows how hard I worked when I was ten years old to conquer my native tendency to dizziness from altitudes! I walked on high railway trestles, and hell knows what not! But I digress. All Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Jersey City lay below, outspread like a map—in fact, I told Mortonius that the city-

planners had done an excellent job in making the place almost as good as the map in my Hammond Atlas at home.

At length descending, we set out for the . . . financial district. In the sub. we saw Houtain's *Home Brew* on sale, and I picked up a copy with sophisticated nonchalance and pointed out my name and work. . . . Reg'lar author'n' ever'thin'. . . . Then we came to the surface in Old New-York—the financial district and heart of the town in Dutch and early British days. . . . Now came the subway again—to Brooklyn. . . . We hit the old residential district, which is the world's only replica of Boston's Back Bay. For a cent I'd have taken oath I was in Beacon-Street with the Charles peeping betwixt the brick mansions. At Montague St. we found an abandoned garden and broken flight of steps which set both the poets off mooning—you may hear the echoes in some amateur journal. But the big thing was Manhattan Bridge and the view of the New-York skyline there obtained. Right there I surrendered to Klei about the beauties of his home town. Out of the waters it rose at twilight; cold, proud, and beautiful; an Eastern city of wonder whose brothers the mountains are. It was not like any city of earth, for above purple mists rose towers, spires, and pyramids which one may only dream of in opiate lands beyond the Oxus; towers, spires and pyramids that no man could fashion, but that bloomed flower-like and delicate; the bridges up which fairies walk to the sky; the visions of giants that play with the clouds. Only Dunsany could fashion its equal, and he in dreams only. And as I gazed upon this gorgeous phantom sight I said to the wise men about me. "Behold the beauty of earth, which is mineral, titanic, and frore; even as a palace of ice by the ultimate boreal pole, which hath nothing of man in it. For this was the world born, and the contemplative moon. And as insects unseen and unsung have reared in warm seas the loveliness that is coral, branching and glorious; so have insects called men, a little seen and a little sung, reared to the sky these pinnacles of breathing stone. Let us be patient. Not long will insects swarm upon earth, but long will stand the beauty whose creation was their task. And when the world is ice and the heavens are dim, and the jest called life long-forgotten; then will rubescent stars drink from these unvocal flowers of stone the joy and the loveliness that were made for the delight of stars."

* * * * *

Sunday morning Loveman and I explored Prospect Park, fed the squirrels, and talked literature. At noon I did some kodak shooting, during which process there dawned upon us the new infant celebrity who was to form our principal focus of interest during the entire residue of the sojourn—

FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.

Long, whose phantasies you have doubtless read (I believe you once mistook one for Theobaldian stuff!) is an exquisite boy of twenty who hardly looks fifteen. He is dark and slight, with a bushy wealth of almost black hair and a delicate, beautiful face still a stranger to the gillette. I think he likes the tiny collection of lip-hairs—about six on one side and five on the other—which may with assiduous care some day help to enhance his genuine resemblance to his chief idol—Edgar Allan Poe. . . . A scholar; a fantaisiste; a prose-poet; a sincere and intelligent disciple of Poe, Baudelaire, and the French decadents. He is as modest as Loveman himself. . . . He attends N. P. University, but is now out because of his convalescence from last winter's appendicitis operations. His life was despaired of, and he is still in bandages. He cannot walk swiftly yet, and has to retire each night at nine.

At dinner—about one-thirty—were Loveman, Theobald, Long, Mme. Greene, and the latter's flapper offspring, yclept Florences—pert, spoiled, and ultra-independent infant rather more hard-boiled of visage than her benignant mater. Trough-exercise was no sooner completed than a sizeable gang began to assemble. . . .

The gathering, from which Mortonius had to be absent on account of a lecture, dispersed at twilight; whereupon Mme. Greene, who cannot keep still for two consecutive seconds, piloted Loveman and me through Prospect Park, which we had already explored. Upon returning to 259, Mortonius was discovered on the doorstep; and his amiability met with so haughty a reception that my Anglo-Saxon pride rebelled! I took him under my own thoroughly British wing, and let the foreigners shift for themselves during the residue of the evening; which included supper (how these birds do *eat!*) and a trip down to see the famed "White Way" and some of its denizens all lit up. The illumination is unique and extensive, but neither superlatively impressive nor in any sense truly artistic. At the elevated station at 6th

Ave. and 42nd St. I lost my fellow Anglo-Saxon, whose home is far to the north in the semi-African jungles of Harlem; and the depleted party was haled to a swell eatery where the waiters hardly speak English and have no spots on their immaculate shirt-fronts. Eating again—my gawd! What are their stomachs made of! Our hostess ordered a strawberry concoction probably closely akin to what she handed you at the Pfister—and of which I was able to partake only because I had made the preceding meal a matter of urbane evasion.

Thereafter once again to Parkside via subway—then more or less oblivion. It was hard work persuading Loveman to remain in N. Y. all this time, but perfect team-work did it. He saw that he could get no position, though Mme. Greene tried with frantic generosity to secure one for him—even unto the last moment.

We had a date to meet Klei on the Pub. Libe steps at six-thirty.

. . . . .

Klei . . . proceeded to lead us into the slums; with "Chinatown" as an ulterior objective. My gawd—what a filthy dump! I thought Providence had slums, and antique Bostonium as well; but damn me if I ever saw anything like the sprawling sty-atmosphere of N. Y.'s lower East Side. We walked—at my suggestion—in the middle of the street, for contact with the heterogeneous sidewalk denizens, spilled out of their bulging brick kennels as if by a spawning beyond the capacity of the places, was not by any means to be sought. At times, though, we struck peculiarly deserted areas—these swine have instinctive swarming movements, no doubt, which no ordinary biologist can fathom. Gawd knows what they are—. . .—a bastard mess of stewing mongrel flesh without intellect, repellent to eye, nose, and imagination—would to heaven a kindly gust of cyanogen could asphyxiate the whole gigantic abortion, end the misery, and clean out the place. The streets, even in the centre, are filthy with old papers and vegetable debris—probably the street-cleaners dislike to soil their white uniforms by visiting such infernos.

* * * * *

We emerged on the Bowery, and proceeded to cross Manhattan Bridge to Brooklyn. Here we saw the city Skyline electrically illumined, but it did not equal that flower-like, fairy-like vision in the twilight, when softly golden pinnacles reached up to consort with the first stars

of evening. Loveman and I were damn near dead with tramping, but I refused to show it. Morton had called me the most nonchalant and imperturbable person he had ever seen, whose cynical poise could not be shaken even by a River Beach rollercoasting thunderbolt, so I resolved to justify his flattery or die standing and jesting. How Klei stands such tramping about, only the local small gods of the city can reveal. By the time we reached a homeward subway I was ready to write a joint two-Love elegy.

Tuesday morning—last full day—found me a pretty drowsy customer. I went out and purchased a much-needed new collar, and returned to rest in the deserted flat whilst Loveman and Mme. Greene went about their respective Metropolitan affairs. I had arranged to meet Loveman at the Pub. Libe at noon—but eheu! I got to sleep and was nearly an hour late! We went to Long's again for dinner, and found an entire change of dietetic programme just as elaborate as the first spread. They do that sort of thing right along—as would we all, no doubt, if we had the dough! I can recall traces of it in mine own household in extreme youth, ere chill penury had got in his most repressive work.

. . . . .

We met Mme. Greene in front of her lid shop, and after a ceremonious farewell kid Long hiked for the northbound elevated. Too bad he wasn't able to keep with us—but he has to be careful of his convalescent anatomy. When he is better, he and Mortonius will be great pals—Jim Ferd has a vast paternal admiration for his unusual qualities. Meanwhile he is getting more closely in touch with the United—Loveman, Galpin, and Theobald. Great Kid, we'll say! After the adieu the residual triad hiked to a Cafe of semi-subterranean altitude on 49th St., where the lavish Mme. Greene made what appeared to be a sturdy effort to buy the place out. Actually, I suppose it was what they call their regular dinner, Italian style,—but I'd like to see the human being who could eat it all! I wonder what they do with the inevitable residuum? Chicken, spaghetti, and other things were included—damn me if I remember. The order of courses had no relation to Anglo-Saxon dining customs, and gawd knows I didn't try to tackle half of 'em. When we broke away it was to attend a performance, in the 49th St. Theatre, of that rather well known Muscovite melange of cleverly dippy vaudeville called the *Chauve Souris* and managed by a comical fattish cuss of long speeches and short English named НИНИТА Б А Д IEB (since the limit of your linguistick attainment is Assyrian cuneiform, I'll translate it—

Nikita Balieff.) It was a balmy sort of mess in spots, but pretty damn good at that. The star act was a company of ginks dressed up with inimitable cleverness as *wooden soldiers*. Their musical drill was sure some knockout—it brought down the house. Take it from me—in a couple years ham companies 'll be tryin' to put over that act in every tank town on the small-time circuit! It's a bird, and no mistake! When the show let out, darn the luck, it was raining again; but not all the aqueous wrath of the sky could dampen the spirits of the irrepressible Mme. Greene—so she led the docile guests to a Russian restaurant (*east* again—bah!) on thirty-something street. We trifled lightly with cake and coffee, and finally hit the Parkside trail. After Mme. Greene's departure Loveman and I finished valise-packing and prepared to snatch a bit of rest before our simultaneous embarkation for opposite points on the morrow. He gave me some books to remember him by—good boy!

Wednesday we were up betimes, and guided by Mme. Greene to the Grand Central Station via the underground. It's quite a dee-po, but not so artistic as the Pennsylvania—or, for that matter, as the Union Station in Worcester. But it beats by a mile anything in Boston or Providence. My train left for the East at eight-thirty-three a. m.; Loveman's for the West at eight-forty-five. Mine was N. Y. N. H. S. H.; his was N. Y. C. & H. R. Mme. Greene bade the twain a joint farewell when the time arrived for her to hit 57th St. and work; and thereafter Lovemanus and I discoursed in the manner of a Greek and a Roman about to part in brotherly amity. . . .

Let's hear from you, Old Top!

CVRA . VT. VALEAS .
M. LOLLIVS . PALICANVS .

104. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Home
June 9, 1922

My dear Frank Belknap:—

My presence in Merrimac, previously mentioned, was part of a delightful trip I lately took through the ancient New-England countryside. My hosts were the family of the *United*'s Historian, Miss Little,

whose 150-year-old Colonial homestead—a vast spreading edifice built by Littles and never going out of the dynasty—is indescribably fascinating to the antiquarian. Some of it has been restored, but knowing my archaic tastes they always assign me a room in the unrestored part—where I sleep on a four-poster bed and under blankets all made in the eighteenth century. . . .

On the last day of my sojourn I motored north with the Littles, who were going to their summer camp on Lake Winnepesaukee. They took me to the last point on the railway leading to Boston—Dover, N. H., which marks the farthest north I ever was. I had my first sight of your aestival state of Maine, though we did not enter it.

This ride was the crowning event of the journey—a trip back through Time, extending 75 to 200 years, and plunging me into the heart of an ancient New-England which I had mourned as dead and buried. Words cannot convey the charms of the winding, hilly road; the placid pastoral panoramas at every turn; the magic glimpses of cool centuried farmhouses amidst old gardens and under venerable and gigantic trees. I saw old well-sweeps and ox-teams—and all these things not fragmentarily or decadently, as agrestic things seem in Southern New-England, but in fresh and pristine vigour as if nothing else in the world existed. Who could dream that 1800 was past, or that immigrants infested our shores? The villages were enchanting—opium-dreams of delicate foilage and old white houses. Portsmouth is a city of the Georgian age—there is a glorious atavism to be derived from a ride through its shady residence streets, all lined with mansions whose ornate doorways and brass knockers bespeak the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty, King George the Second.

At one point our ride lay sharply eastward, and as we ascended a rise the vegetation became less luxuriant. Then stretches of marsh-land appeared, and birds flying on lofty pinions. An embankment loomed ahead, over which we could finally look—and as that look came, there arose inwardly the old cry of Xenophon's ten-thousand—"Thalatta! Thalatta!" For it was the sea, the broad, boundless, billowing British sea—sacred to our fathers' sceptred Isle—

> "——the silver sea
> Which serves it in the office of a wall
> Or as a neat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands."

There was a lone southward-sailing ship, and far out the eye could barely discern the misty suggestion of the half-fabulous Isles of Shoals. I had not seen the ocean before for six years—the glimpses one gets in harbours are nothing.

Like you, I am impressed with the futility of all effort—and the only reason I ever read or write anything is that I would be still more miserable if I didn't. As it is, I am not nearly so active and studious as I was in youth—when I felt that it led somewhere. Nowadays I am active only in order to kill boredom—but that is something. The only legitimate artistic motive is to please oneself—to utter things because they have to be uttered, or because it is by uttering them that one may be most comfortable. *Imagination* is the great refuge. That is the theme of the weird Vathek-like novel *Azathoth*, on whose opening pages I have been experimenting. I planned it long ago, but only began work—or play—on it a few days ago. Probably I'll never finish it—possibly I'll never get even a chapter written—but it amuses me just now to pretend to myself that I'm going to write it. . . .

. . . . . I may see Mrs. Greene later this month, since she is spending several weeks at Magnolia, Massachusetts, and invites me to come some Sunday if convenient. She is one of the most kindly and generous persons in amateurdom, and is proving of great aid to the cause. . . .

Sincerely and grandpaternally yours,
H. P.

105. TO MRS. ANNE TILLERY RENSHAW

598 Angell Street
Providence, R.I.
June 14, 1922

My dear Mrs. Renshaw:—

David V. Bush is a short, plump fellow of about forty-five, with a bland face, bald head, and very fair taste in attire. He is actually an immensely good sort—kindly, affable, winning, and smiling. Probably he has to be in order to induce people to let him live after they have read his verse. His keynote is hearty good-fellowship, and I almost think he is rather sincere about it. His "success-in-life" stuff is no joke so far as

finance is concerned; for with his present "psychological" mountebank outfit, his Theobaldised books of doggerel, and his newly-founded magazine, *Mind Power Plus*, he actually shovels in the coin at a very gratifying rate. Otherwise he'd never have a suite at the Copley-Plaza. He welcomed Old Grandfather Theobald with open arms and mouth—and discoursed for many moments on all things beneath the solar orb; displaying an intelligent knowledge of current events which would do credit to anyone under ten years of age. What amazed me most of all is that he does not mispronounce badly. No doubt his wife, a former teacher, has corrected some of his original orthopeic creations; but from his verse one would never guess that he is so well able to make himself understood in his native tongue. He is very ambitious. Oh, dear, yes! With becoming modesty he announces his intention of revolutionising the country with his new gospel of dynamic psychology; which has all the virtues of "New Thought" plus a saving vagueness which prevents its absurdity from being exposed before the credulous public amongst whom his missionary labours lie. He means well, and undoubtedly believes much of what he preaches. I think I have before mentioned that David started life as a poor farmer's boy—his father could neither read nor write till after his marriage—coming to Philadelphia when six years old, and thereafter almost ruining his health selling loads of papers too heavy for him to carry, and lacking even a bed to sleep on. In school he was taunted as backward (they must have seen his verse!), and in later life he was buffeted from pillar to post—successively as a trick cyclist in a circus, a ten-twenty-thirty "ham" actor, a "Shakespearian interpreter" on the lecture platform, a "success" orator, a clergyman, and a "modern psychologist". What the fellow really can do is to fascinate people by sheer force of a pleasing manner. He is a natural orator—of that there is no doubt—a very fair actor, and an undeniably efficient organiser and business-man. His aesthetic crimes are due to a blind spot in his critical faculty—he makes a public ass of himself when others with no greater gifts cut a better figure through their knowledge of when to keep quiet. But he is not quite so blind to the inferiority of his work as would appear from his writings. He knows he's no Keats, and laments it. Aside from the trifling matter of reclaiming the world from all its folly and misery, Dave's prime ambition is to be a great actor—not the tank circuit sort he used to be, but the regular Mantell or Barrymore sort of thing. I say

"ambition", though Dave wouldn't call it that, since he thinks he's it already! In fact, he questioned me very interestedly about the modern American stage (whereof his ignorance is perfect) in an effort to ascertain whether there is any outstanding dramatist capable of writing a play to order which may suit his exacting requirements. He wants a starring vehicle for himself, in which the extremes of comedy are combined with the extremes of tragedy—in short, he wants to play *Hamlet* and the *Grave-digger* all at once in the same play—and the play must have a conclusion which drives home the truth of the psychology Dave preached. I do not wonder that his search must be exhaustive—so mighty a paragon of mixed artistic and didactic dramaturgy do his requirements demand! When he asked me very pressingly for the name of America's greatest dramatist, I humbly spoke a good word for that promising young person Eugene O'Neill—whose *Emperor Jones*, it developed, Davy had already seen without witting the author thereof. When I told him that 'Gene is James O'Neills's son, his face lighted with intelligence—for in soorth, the old boy was not unknown to the admiring David in days agone. And when I had finished, Dave hauled out his inevitable note-book and took down O'Neill's name and address—with the happy intention of writing him very soon anent the job of making a nice tragic-comedy, with suitable moral, to order.

. . .

Back in Boston, I called at the new Parker-Miniter establishment, slept at the Brunswick, seat of last year's convention, and on the next day "did" the art museum and all the old grave-yards. In the evening I attended one of Bush's lectures—and marvelled. Boston, with its predilection for transcendental nonsense, is the champion jay town, of my limited geographical experience. Though Bush said the house was nothing as compared with his shouting, S. R. O. western audiences, it sure was some bunch for a Boston event—and was composed not only of the dumb-bells and coal-heavers one would expect, but also of many who bore the unmistakable stigmata of Bostonese culchaw. The subject was about the power of thought—oh, but thought is a wonderful thing! I never realised before—or since—just how wonderful a thing thought is! Bush told heaps of anecdotes—one about a gentleman who was burned to death because he wouldn't get a priest to give the last rites to his pore dyin' wife. At another time he attacked the local tramway service—which drew much applause. I applauded, too, having that

day ridden in a crazy combination of the vintage of 1880—a couple of broken-down horse-cars spliced together and mounted on the wheels of some kid's discarded velocipede—or something like that. But the real gem—a gem because it had no connection with the lecture—was Davy's very tragic protrayal of John B. Gough's delirium tremens. This sure was a bird of an act—he had a red and green spotlight alternating, and made faces and clawed the air in fine style as he screamingly struggled with the pink snakes and other friendly beasties. If I were putting on a show I'd be tempted to hire Dave as a Roman mob or something like that.—But no doubt Gene O'Neill will get ahead of me by furnishing that starring vehicle. The ordeal was over about ten-thirty, and I chuckled to see the victims pause at a table in the foyer and plank down good money for bum verses I had tinkered up in past years. There were books, wall-cards, and all that sort of thing; and not one bally stanza whose final form didn't come from Grandpa Theobald's labouring pen. If Bush can sell the stuff like that, Morton and I will have to boost our rates! This jamboree, I may mention, was held at Convention Hall on St. Botolph St.—but stay! I'll chuck a circular in this letter. That will give you a recent mug of Davy—though in truth he doesn't look quite so bad as all that. After the show Dave wante to dine with me at a cafe but I had to beat it for the train, hence bade a cordial good-bye. After all, he's a harmless, likeable chap, and I fancy it will be a bit less impossible to do his work in future. He enjoys life—as do all who are spared the curse of intelligence.

Yr. most obt. Servt.,
L: Theobald Jun.

106. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Providence-Plantations
17th June, 1722

Benevolent Bolingbroke:—

Your sorrow at the completion of my sinister stories, is balanc'd by mine own delight at the same event. The burden was frightful, the pay a myth after the second cheque, and the results painfully wanting in authentick art. If I merit your encomium as a writer of tales, 'tis surely

on less commercial products that you must have bas'd it. Hereafter *Home Brew* will reprint my older and better fables from the amateur press, obtaining without cost a much superior sort of writing—tho' a sort much less suited to the Mohocks and pretty fellows who no doubt form the readers of Sir George's rakish periodical.

Believe me, Sir, yr. most hble. Obt. Servt.
L: Theobald Jun.

107. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Providence, R.I.
June 21, 1922

My dear Mo:—

Your new friend Mme. Greene is livening up the social programme hereabouts. She is representing her firm at Magnolia, Mass., an ultra-fashionable watering-place on the coast near Gloucester, an hour's ride northeast from Boston; and Sunday she blew into Providentia for the afternoon and evening. For friendliness and generosity she sure beats hell—she is so stuck on my younger aunt Mrs. Gamwell, that she's trying to get her to come to N. Y. and permanently share her abode! And strange to say, my aunt likes her immensely despite a racial and social chasm which she doesn't often bridge. Gawd! Even the dowagers are getting democratic in these decadent days! But damme if Mme. Greene ain't a good sort, after all. She is trying to get the whole bally family to visit her in Magnolia, and failing to do that, is insisting that the old gent accept an invitation for a week or two beginning July 1st. . . . Last Sunday Mme. Greene hit Providence at one-forty-five. My younger aunt and I were at the dee-po to meet her, but she missed us and went on a wild-goose-chase in a taxi up to the house and back! When she finally did heave in sight, my aunt took her to the Crown Hotel for eats (they're as bad as Kleiner!) and put one over on her by paying the check herself! Thereafter occurred a triangular walk to the house, a five-hour session of quadrangular discussion in which the three females got so far away from literature that Grandpa dropped out now and then for an old-gentlemanly nap, more *eats* (gawdelpus!) around nine p. m., and finally a walk back to the deep-o with Grandpa

as the sole local guide. This jaunt terminated in a watery grave. The day was dubious, and Mme. Greene had a borrowed umbrella. About helf way down town the overhead sprinklers started, and sail was hoisted. I had no sunshade of me own, for I hate such devices like the devil. All would have been well had the one existing contraption been of sturdy timber—but! Just at the foot of the hill—some five squares from the dee-po—the celestial nimbi began to unload their aqueous cargo in earnest, and the damn portable Pantheon-dome dissolved into its constituent molecules like Ol' Doc Holmes' uni-equine vehicle; the umbrellian debris was cast into the nearest convenient gutter! Without being totally dissolved, the navigators finally reached port ten or fifteen minutes before train-time; and the only way I could stop Mme. Greene from hiring a taxi to cart my remains home for identification was to point out that not all the streams of Pater Oceanus could make me wetter than I was! My 1921 straw hat and 1918 summer suit sure were objects which Triton would have delighted to drape with fraternal seaweed. Mme. Greene had a wonderfully opportune cloak—but as for her hat—it's damn lucky she's in the millinery business! That lid'll never unfold its flowers to the summer sun again. And as I left the station on me 'omeward way—behold! The bally rain, having done its worst, had stopped! Mme. Greene sure had some visit—begining with a false-alarm taxi ride and ending with a flood. . . .

Let's hear from ya, kid!
Yr. obt. THEOBALDVS.

108. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

9231 Birchdale Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio
Aug. 4, 1922

My dear Aunt Lillian:—

. . . . . Saturday, at six-thirty p.m., I boarded the "Lake Shore Limited" at the Grand Central, and was soon whirling up the Hudson amidst the resplendent Palisades and Catskills.

I had expected to seem rather clumsy and inexperienced in sleeping-car procedure—I had an upper berth, and knew nothing of the technique—but by a judicious combination of guess-work, deduction, and observation I managed to "get by" without drawing the least bit of notice to my ignorance. I dressed and undressed in my berth—some feat!

Having rested surprisingly well, I awaked in Pennsylvania and settled down to await the momentous Clevelandic arrival. The train was one and one-half hours late, but at ten-thirty (or I should say, *nine-thirty*, since Cleveland does not use daylight time) the suburban 105th St. station was reached. Meanwhile I had been intensely interested in watching the Ohio landscape from the window. It is quite unlike—and inferior to—New-England, having vast level stretches, sparser vegetation and foliage, and different styles of architecture. (Flatter roofs, etc.) The villages are insufferably dismal—like *Main St.* They have no ancient features, and totally lack the mellow charm and scenery which make New-England villages so delightful. I was glad that my destination was a large city!

At ten-thirty I alighted from the train, and immediately perceived a lank, altitudinous, hatless form loping cordially toward me. Mutual recognition? I'll say so! The Kid is *exactly* like those recent Madison pictures, and he says I am exactly like my own snapshots. Some meeting! I exclaimed spontaneously —"So this is my Son Alfredus!" And he responded, "It sure is!" We shook hands till paralysis threatened to set in, and then began to talk an incessant stream. Are we congenial? I'll tell the world! The Kid is utterly delightful—exactly the same as he is on paper, and as fascinating a companion as Harold Munroe into the bargain. We have not been out of each other's sight a second since we met, except when sleeping, and it will certainly be a melancholy even when I have to bid him *au revoir* on the fifteenth at midnight. At that hour he goes to Mackinac to join his father in a sail around the Great Lakes, whilst I go to New-York. After our ecstacy of greetings, Alfredus guided me to a neat and inexpensive lunch counter. (Where we have since taken most of our humble but excellent meals). The blessed child insisted not only on paying for his Grandpa's refreshments, but on carrying the old gentleman's heavy valise as well. Some boy! Subsequently we proceeded to our joint hangout—9231 Birchdale—which is just around the corner from Loveman's house. The neighbourhood is very good, and the cottage very pleasant. My room is diagonally across a hall from my grandson's. We rise about noon, eat

twice a day, and retire after midnight—a routine forming a sort of cross betwixt normalcy and Theobaldism. This is A. G.'s ordinary schedule when not in school. After Saturday Alfredus and I will be sole masters of the house—the family is going away for a week, leaving us in undisturbed possession. Probably we shall sing and shout to our hearts' content—and dance clog dances in the parlour if we want to! But we shan't break any windows or spit tobacco on the floor. Heigho—but this is the life!

After settling down at 9231, we proceeded around the corner to Loveman's house—The Lonore Apartments—which is an excellent place. S. L. was on hand, looking ten years younger and ten times more cheerful than last April, and full of flattering compliments for the Old Gentleman. His mother, a kindly and excellent person, and his genial brother—with the automobile— were on hand, and presently took us for a ride of sightseeing. Loveman's room is a veritable museum—filled with antiques and books of rare vintage. His devotion to all the arts is well attested by a profusion of art books and an unrivalled collection of classical records for the phonograph. Before he and Alfredus are through with me, I shall probably be half-civilised—they feed me large doses of art, music, and literature. . . . Sunday evening we met the rare book dealer George Kirk—a friend of Loveman's—and the quartette of us explored the excellent Cleveland Art Museum in Wade Park.

Monday morning Alfredus and I loafed around Loveman's room—looking at rare books and pictures, and hearing phonograph records. We saw the hideous drawings of Loveman's friend Clark Ashton Smith—grotesque, unutterable things,—and I took some over here for subsequent study. Just as samples, I will enclose a few—which *please return with care,* (send them in the enclosed envelope, which is large enough). Did you ever see anything more ghoulish? Smith is a genius, beyond a doubt. . . .

Meanwhile a strange transformation had taken place in the aspect of Grandfather Theobald! That I had become tanned and thinner, was only to be expected—but who could have expected the rest? Moved by the oppressive heat, and by the constant and rejuvenating companionship of youth, I proceeded to imitate my grandson in the following details:

(a) I left off my vest and bought a belt—a fine new kind with

my initial on the buckle; which has no perforations, but adjusts to *any* circumference.

(b) I bought some *some collars* (yes, really!) and have worn them continuously.

(c) I commenced going *hatless* like A. G.—using a hat only on formal occasions.

Can you picture me vestless, hatless, soft-collared, and belted, ambling about with a boy of twenty, as if I were no older? I will have Alfredus take a snap shot to prove it! One can be free and easy in a provincial city—when I hit New York again I shall resume the solemn manner and sedate vestments befitting my advanced years, but for the present I have cast aside the eleven years which separate me from His Imperial Kidship! The face is doing finely, and I am altogether free from melancholy—positively cheerful, in fact. What I need in order to be cheerful is the constant company of youthful and congenial literary persons.

With every good wish, I have the honour to subscribe myself
Yr. most aff: nephew and obt. Servt.
H. P. L.

109. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Cleveland, Ohio
August 12, 1922

My dear Mr. Smith:—

I trust you will pardon the liberty taken by an absolute stranger in writing you, for I cannot refrain from expressing the appreciation aroused in me by your drawings & poetry, as shown me by my friend, Mr. Samuel Loveman, whom I am now visiting in Cleveland. Your book, containing matter only chronologically classifiable as juvenilia, impresses me as a work of the most distinguished genius; & makes me anxious to see the new volume which I understand is in course of preparation.

Of the drawings & water-colours I lack a vocabulary adequate to ex-

press my enthusiastic admiration. What a world of opiate phantasy & horror is here unveiled, & what an unique power & perspective must lie behind it! I speak with especial sincerity & enthusiasm, because my own especial tastes centre almost wholly around the grotesque & the arabesque. I have tried to write short stories & sketches affording glimpses into the unknown abysses of terror which leer beyond the boundaries of the known, but have never succeeded in evoking even a fraction of the stark hideousness conveyed by any one of your ghoulishly potent designs.

I should deem it a great honour to hear from you if you have the leisure & inclination to address an obscurity, & to learn where I may behold other poems by the hand which created such works of art as *Nero, The Star-Treader,* & the exquisite sonnets which companion them. That I have not work of even approximately equal genius to exhibit in reciprocation, is the fault of my mediocre ability & not of my inclination.

Apologising for this intrusion upon your time, & again expressing the appreciation which every renewed glimpse of your work increases, I beg the honour to remain

Yr most obedient Servt.
HPLovecraft

110. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn, New York
August 31, 1922

My dear Aunt Lillian:—

I hope you received the apple pie which Mrs. Greene sent you. It is of her especial original brand, which undoubtedly eclipses any other I have encountered. I mailed it myself at the Flatbush Post Office, Tuesday morning, and was told it would reach you the next day.

Sept. 1, 1922.

At the above point I had to drop my pen in order to keep my engagement with Kid Long. We had a great time—"doing" the Fine Arts Museum in greater detail than Loveman and I could follow last

66 College St.,
Providence, R.I.,
Dec. 1, 1934.

To the Members of the Neo-Klaicomolo:

It's a pleasure to see & read, at last, a poem which I have long praised for many years by one whose judgment is to be depended upon. Confronted by "The Gospel of Eshcol", I find, as usual, that the enthusiasm of my old friend Maurice Winter Moe is indeed well justified. In its delicately vivid imagery, uniformly musical rhythm, & pervasively haunting atmosphere of tempered pensiveness, this distinguished specimen fulfils the requirements of true poetry in every particular. The liquid softness of sound, & the union of sound & sense, so manifest in every part produces the verse as an entwined product of the old tradition; even though its date brings it close to the dawn of the present era of experiment. It is very clearly steeped in the mellow lore of antique scholarship, with its touch of biblical allusion & its subtle reflection of the classical spirit. The mysterious Passer, with his vine-clustered thyrsus, is a typical avatar of Dionysus & the ecstatic spirit of adventurous expectancy associated with him; & one may feel an almost Keatsian touch in such lines as:

> "One pass'd, his staff dark purple clusters bent;
> The wine juices dripp'd along the sand,
> And all the air throbb'd fragrance as he went."

Centuries — even millennia — of song & folklore & memory have given to passages like this a curious power to evoke tenuous, half-familiar visions of wonder & beauty. We recall such imperishable pictures as that in the third book of the Metamorphoses:

> "Impediunt hederae ramos, redeuntque recursu
> Sanguis; et oppositis distringunt vela corymbis.
> Ipse, racemiferis frontem circumdatus uuis,
> Pampineis agitat orlatam frondibus hastam.
> Quem circa tigres, simulacraque uersa lyncum,
> Pictaeque iacent fera corpora pantherarum."

Since the primary function of a poem is not to tell a story but to present a picture or mirror a mood, & since the given specimen fulfils this function so well, it will not be necessary to enquire too closely into the detailed meaning of the verses. It would appear that the message is one of philosophic & not unhopeful disillusionment; as of a person of middle years who, having tasted the buoyant & expectant light-headedness of youth, finds the extravagant promises of those days unfulfilled, yet who continues to feel with the pathetic confidence of naivete that perhaps the promises may yet be realised — or at least that the state of expectancy may return in all its rosecal colours. This purport is indicated not only by the specific imagery, but by the groundwork of allusion; for in the scriptural tale (Deuteronomy I, 24-5) the fruits of the valley of Eshcol, in the Promised Land which the Hebrews sought to conquer, were secured by spies & brought to their leader Moses as a sample of the flowing opulence of the region. Thus there is a suggestion that the figurative grapes — the joys of youth — are regarded as specimens or harbingers of kindred joys lying ahead, to be gained through patience or effort. The precise interpretation is rather difficult, since some degree of apparent contradiction exists. In the biblical account, the recipients

SPECIMEN OF A LOVECRAFT LETTER

YOUNG ALFRED GALPIN

April, and getting caught in such a beastly thunder-storm that we had to take a taxi back to his house. The Longs are all splendid—their house is upset with painters and decorators, so they dine out at an exclusive uptown cafe; the St. George, on Broadway. Each meal-time they insist on my going with them, and likewise insist on paying all expenses. . . . Really, I never knew the world held so many generous people till I started on my travels! I am trying to show my appreciation by presenting the Kid with a book which he wanted very much—Beckford's *Vathek*. It is hard to get nowadays, but Mrs. Greene knows N. Y. book shops very well, and assisted me in securing a small and inexpensive, yet exquisitely artistic copy through E. P. Dutton Co. I shall mail it tonight to little Belknap at Atlantic City—he will go into ecstasies over it. And yet it is a cheap return for all the lavish hospitality his family have shown me. . . .

—Extra! Special! The postman just arrived with the latest bunch of forwarded mail, and guess who that Auburn, Cal. letter was from? CLARK ASHTON SMITH, the author of *The Star Treader, Odes and Sonnets, The Hasheesh-Eater,* etc., and the artist who drew the unutterably hideous pictures I sent you! I had written him at Loveman's suggestion, but never thought he would answer. He's a good fellow—he has seen one of my stories (*Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, which Loveman sent him), praises it effusively, and wants to see more. I shall accommodate him, you can bet! Did I tell you—or A. E. P. G.—that I have both of his already published works? Galpin (generous little divvle!) gave me *The Star-Treader,* whilst George Kirk (benevolent soul!) gave me *Odes and Sonnets* (deluxe edition, price $6.00) out of his regular stock. As you know, Kirk is a bookseller . . . Smith is a genius. As a poet he is on a par with Loveman, and as an artist he is alone in his field. . . .

Yr. aff. nephew and obt. Servt.—
H. P. L.

111. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Ave
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Sept. 13, 1922

My dear Aunt Lillian:—

. . . . . Today Morton is busy, and Kid Long and I intend to spend the whole afternoon exploring old bookshops in 59th Street. May Heaven guard my purse in the face of such temptation! Belknap is going to take along a suitcase full of old books which he wishes to get rid of either by sale or by trade. If he can strike a good bargain, I may try the same thing with some of the superfluous junk in the attic—though Providence shops have not such a good variety of books to trade in return. 59th Street is surely the centre of the book-lover's universe—anyone who can walk along it between Lexington and Madison Avenues without spending money is a hero and deserves a medal! . . .

In my last letter I told you about the fake Poe "poem" which I wrote as part of the hoax for Galpinius prepared by Belknap and me. The result was more than we ever expected, for although of course Alfredus did not believe Poe wrote the piece, he praised it to the skies as a work of art, and devoted a long paragraph to an analysis of its "good points", "tranquil beauty", etc. etc. He fancied we had copied it from the obscure works of some standard poet—probably Arthur O'Shaughnessy—a vast joke considering the fact that it was thrown together spoofingly in fifteen minutes' time by one whom Galpin deems anything but a poet! We are stringing the kid along a while—giving him the impression that Belknap wrote it.

. . . . . Positively, I never saw such universal and profound cordiality as that which I have struck during this trip! Mrs. Greene says she hates to hear my departure even alluded to, and wishes that the matter could be reversed by your coming to N. Y. instead of my going to Providence; and small Belknap entreats me to be as slow as possible in leaving him to his accustomed desolation—he told Mrs. Greene over the telephone that 'he can't see enough of me'! And Morton and Kleiner—bless my soul, but they are flattering in their utterances! Moreover, fancy who has just written, asking me to meet him if convenient in New York at the Victor Hotel, 37th Street and 5th Avenue, on Saturday, Sept. 23, (one week from today) 1922? None other than that John Russell, the Florida Scotchman who in 1913 conducted the *Argosy* controversy with me which led to my discovering amateur journalism! . . .

Yr. aff: Nephew and obt. Servt.
H. P. L.

112. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Sept. 27, 1922
598 Angell St.

My dear Mr. Smith:—

It is needless to say that I was vastly pleased to receive your reply to my unsolicited letter, & that I appreciate very much your courtesy in thus noticing an obscure companion in the realms of the macabre. Please do not deem my praise of your work excessive, but believe me when I repeat that every line is of the most poignant & singular power. Since I wrote my former letter I have re-read both your books (which I possess) many times; each time deriving a new thrill of mixed admiration & aesthetic gratification. I do not believe I either flatter or exaggerate when I say that such things as *Memnon at Midnight, Exotique, Nero, Shadow of Nightmare, White Death, Ode to the Abyss,* &c.—to mention only a few—are authentic American classics, surpassed by nothing in our contemporary literature & equalled by little. The unique vision & perspective with which you see the universe have that inimitable individuality & selective power which make genius. . . .

With every kind of appreciation & admiration, believe me!

Most sincerely yrs
HPLovecraft

113. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn, New York
Sept. 29, 1922

My Dear Aunt Lillian:—

As to my recent programme—I believe the last chronicle left off Saturday, Sept. 16, with a hasty exterior P. S. telling of the afternoon's trip with Kleiner, Belknap, and Morton. That evening Kleiner and I investigated the principal antiquity of this section—the old Dutch Reformed Church—and were well repaid for our quest. . . . Around the oil pile is a hoary churchyard, with interments dating from about 1730 to the middle of the nineteenth century. Nearly all the stones bear inscriptions and epitaphs in the Dutch language—beginning with the characteristic "Hier lygen", which analogy makes quite easily recognisable to the devotee of English graveyards. Up to about 1815 or 1820 the Dutch tongue predominates. . . . From one of the crumbling gravestones—dated 1747—I chipped a small piece to carry away. It lies before me as I write—and ought to suggest some sort of a horror-story. I must some night place it beneath my pillow as I sleep . . . who can say what *thing* might not come out of the centuried earth to exact vengeance for his descrated tomb? And should it come, who can say what it might not resemble? At midnight, in many antique burying-grounds, shadows steal terribly about; shadows in periwigs and three-cornered hats, and tattered, mouldy knee-breeches that flap about crumbling bones. They have no voices, but sometimes do hideous deeds silently.

. . . . . Later we sat on a bench and discussed *Bush work*, which Belknap thought he might try for a while. I revised some from a current job then and there—and Belknap abandoned his plan when he saw what nerve-racking business it was. He said he wasn't sure he *could* do it—and that even if he *could*, he was sure he *wouldn't*. This reminds me that a very welcome Bush cheque came today—he is now paying just *three times* the former highest rate, and doing it cheerfully. I told him that only at this high price could I guarantee my own personal service—he doesn't like Morton's work so well, and asked me to

do as much as possible myself. I now get *$1.00 per 8 lines*—very convenient for a traveller seeing the big town, I can assure you! In the evening Mrs. Greene and I went to see *The Serpent's Tooth* at the Little Theatre on 44th St. It was rather good,—epigrammatic and smart—though the sophisticated quality was marred by an incongruous strain of conventional sentimentalism and bourgeois psychology. I will enclose the programme.

Wednesday found me at Belknap's again—sometimes I fear I impose on the Longs by being with them at dinner practically every day, but they protest so violently that I don't impose, that I cannot but believe them! Surely this hospitality is of the first order—New-York eclipses all other cities in the spontaneous cordiality and generosity of its inhabitants—at least, such inhabitants as I have encountered. I thought the Bostonians were flattering, but the Gothamites are more complimentary still! One day when I thought I had another engagement (with Russell, who didn't show up, after all!) but later found I hadn't, and telephoned Belknap that I was coming to see him; Mrs. Long said his face positively lighted up with pleasure when he heard the news of my coming. My head sure will get turned! . . . . . Then I took the Kid down to the Vesey-St. bookshop section, which he had never before seen. This is where Loveman and I secured our bargains last April. Belknap, having sharper eyes than his old Grandpa, picked up a book which I would have given much to have seen first—*Tales of Mystery*, composed of extracts from the most celebrated horror novelists of the eighteenth century—Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, etc. He will later lend his prize to me—just as I am lending him my own prizes. . . .

. . . . . Later we started on a tour of exploration of lower Manhattan; ascending the Woolworth Building—an experience new to Belknap—and gathering impressions along the waterfront. In the Woolworth Tower many souvenirs are on sale, and I could not resist buying a couple—a model of the Woolworth Building (a *bank* for dimes—no doubt commemorative of the Woolworth fortune, made in ten-cent-stores) for twenty-five cents, and one of the Statue of Liberty for ten cents. I hope the dime-bank will teach me thrift in my old age . . . so far I haven't put anything in it! The waterfront was tame after Gloucester—there were no sailing ships present, and the sailors seemed merely tough rather than picturesque. They dress in cheap "store clothes" instead of the peajackets, bandannas, and sashes of ma-

rine fiction. We discussed the advisability of hiring the most sinister-looking crew we could pick, and organising a pirate expedition to the Spanish Main; but finally decided that the specimens we saw were not quite murderous enough to serve as our merry men.

Sunday I had my hair cut—the second time in N. Y. It was, in my opinion, a good job. . . . The lord knows it ought to be, at *sixty-five cents!* Kleiner came over for dinner, and general discussion long reigned. Later Klei and I went for a walk around Flatbush, whilst Mrs. Greene prepared some hats for a customer of the evening—she sometimes makes exceptionally artistic hats herself, aside from the work of the establishment. Good profit—just now she's getting $60.00 for a couple whose raw material cost only $20.00. Forty simoleons for labour which isn't in the least repulsive . . . apparently millinery work beats Bush work! . . .

Monday . . . yes, you guessed it! Up at Belknap's again! I know the upper Broadway and Riverside Drive section as well as Brooklyn—and it's some section, too. This time we organised another bookstall raid—on the hitherto unvisited 4th Ave. district. And oh, boy! what luck I had! For only two plunks I grabbed a *black-letter Ovid*, printed in *1567*, when Bill Shakespeare was a three-year-old toddling around his father's house in Stratford! It is the oldest book I have ever owned. . . .

Wednesday we formed a trio—that now indissoluble triumvirate of Belknapius, Mortonius, and Theobaldus. Dinner at Belknap's, then an expedition to the scenes and impressions of the past—the northwest corner of Manhattan Island where, only twelve miles from the teeming region of skyscrapers, still remains the last scrap of genuine *countryside* in the world's most populous borough. . . .

I have ye honour to subscribe myself as Yr. most aff. nephew and obt. Servt.

H. P. L.

114. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
November 12, 1922

Dear Mr. Smith:—

. . . . . The enclosed published series, *Herbert West—Reanimator*, represents my poorest work—stuff done to order for a vulgar magazine, & written down to the herd's level. This is a good way to pick up an odd dollar now & then—I am about to start another hell-raiser for it, entitled *The Lurking Fear*. Having noticed that you sell your drawings, I ventured to give the editor your name & address—since he wants illustrations for the thing. If you & he can strike an acceptable bargain, I will show you the story when written & suggest what scenes might best lend themselves to illustration—though on second thought I fancy you could decide this better than I. One need not be ashamed to write or draw for such magazines—Poe & Bierce, I believe, used to write for any old thing.

Most sincerely yours,
HPLovecraft

115. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
Dec. 2, 1922

Dear Mr. Smith:—

I decided to wait till the whole story *(The Lurking Fear)* was done before sending you anything, since it would hardly be fair to ask you to draw before you have the whole atmosphere & scene to base your conceptions on. I wish I had a better story to offer—this one is frightfully wooden & mechanical because of Houtain's demand that each section be of 2000 words & possess an horrific & suspenseful climax. The conditions were really impossible—he wanted something of *short story* length, yet with essentially the plan & technic of the *novel*.

. . . . . You are a genius in conceiving & rendering noxious, baleful, poisonous vegetation, & I veritably believe my descriptions were excited by some of your drawings which Loveman shewed me. . . .

Most cordially & sincerely yours,
H P Lovecraft

116. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
Jany. 11, 1923

My dear Smith:—

I am indeed glad the California press is cordial toward the book—even if the critics have to resort to stock comparisons & indulge in occasional stupidities. It is something if they know poetry even remotely when they see it! They are like trained animals, picking out certain blocks at certain signals, but indifferent to precisions & nuances. Given a weird tale, they all cry *Poe!* Or perhaps a few of them—on the coast—have heard of Ambrose Bierce. Given a bit of versified Satanism, if they can repress the automatic "Poe" yelp, they never miss good ol' Charles Pierre! What will be really significant, & important for your ultimate recognition, is the notice which Galpin is getting the real magazines to take. If he succeeds as well as I think likely, the world will have the good fortune of discovering a new immortal! Then your books will appear with standard imprints, & no more worry about rural typography & limited circulation! I'd like to see an adequate edition of your complete verse, illustrated by yourself.

I am glad your friend likes *Dagon*—which was written in 1917, & is the second story I wrote that year, after a nine years' silence. In 1908, when I was 18, I was disgusted by my lack of technical experience; & *burned all my stories (of which the number was infinite) but two;* resolving (amusing thought!) to turn to verse in the future. Then, years later, I published these two yarns in an amateur paper; where they were so well received that I began to consider resumption. Finally an amateur editor & critic named W. Paul Cook (Loveman can tell you about him) egged me on to the point of actual production, & *The Tomb*—with all its stiffness—was the result. Next came *Dagon*—& it chagrins

me to admit that I've hardly been able to equal it since. My favourite three tales are *Dagon, Randolph Carter,* & *The Cats of Ulthar.* I only wish the hyperbole of your friend—touching on Poe & Beirce—were true; but realistic observation hath given me abounding humility. If ever the things reach Sterling's eye, let my pray for more leniency than they deserve! The worst drawback to my writing is haste. I do best when I have unlimited time ahead, & can live wholly in the pictures I am imagining.

I am glad you like Dunsany—whose merits I have never been able to point out either to Loveman of Galpin. I certainly was under his influence in the winter of 1919-20—I never had greater joy than in discovering him one day in September 1919! *Celephais, Sarnath, Iranon, White Ship,*—& *The Other Gods,* which you have not yet seen, are my most Dunsanian things. I may yet have occasional returns to that mood, for the charm of Dunsany is endless—as I tried to "put across" in a lecture to one of the amateur journalist clubs in Boston last month. I have read everything of Dunsany's except his new novel—which I have just bought & mean to digest as soon as I get a second to do it in. Of Dunsany I like best of all the *Dreamer's Tales.* Plays hold me less than stories, & Dunsany's newer work has less appeal because of the increasing note of visible irony, humour, & sophistication. I hope that *Don Rodriguez* represents a return to the earlier mood. I saw Dunsany in 1919, when he lectured in Boston. He is the most wholesome & delightful person imaginable.

Most cordially & sincerely yours
H P Lovecraft

117. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Jany. 11, 1923

My Son:—

On Monday I departed, but so fired with the spirit of antient research that I went not home but to Salem, in the same province, for a solitary tour of observation and discovery. The result was an aesthetick and historicall orgy of delight such as I never before experienc'd; for truly, I had not dream'd so much of the *seventeenth* century still re-

main'd for the contemplation of the studious. Salem, as I may mention in case you have seen it not, retains whole streets and squares scarce alter'd since the reign of George the Third; with an impressive array of mansions built by the rich merchants whose ships traded in the Indies, China, and Japan. There is, besides, a surprising profusion of houses built as far back as Charles the First's time, the age of Cromwell's treason, the area of the glorious Restoration, and King William the Third's reign; strange sinister edifices in whose queerly pitch'd roofs and diamond pan'd windows lurk a profusion of weird suggestions. I visited the *Old Witch House,* said to have been inhabited by Rev. Roger Williams before his coming to Providence-Plantations, and investigated the several scenes pertaining to the late ingenious Mr. Hawthorne, including his birthplace, and the house of Seven Gables, where I was shewn a secret staircase and permitted to ascend it. . . .

But not even from Salem did I go directly home; for whilst conversing with natives there, I had learnt of the neighbouring fishing port of *Marblehead,* whose antique quaintness was particularly recommended to me. Taking a stage-coach thither, I was presently borne into the most marvellous region I had ever dream'd of, and furnish'd with the most powerful single aesthetick impression I have receiv'd in years.

Even now it is difficult for me to believe that Marblehead exists, save in some phantasticall dream. It is so contrary to everything usually observable in this age, and so exactly conform'd to the habitual fabrick of my nocturnal visions, that my whole visit partook of an aetheral character scarce compatible with reality. This place was settled in King Charles the First's time, by fishermen of French and English blood from the channel islands. Its Town House, in the town-square, was finish'd in 1727, and by 1770 most of the land was well built up with plain but substantial houses. The ground is very hilly, and the streets were made crooked and narrow, so that when finish'd, the town had gain'd much of the eccentrick aspect of such ancient Gothick towns as Nurenburg, in Bavaria, where the eye beholds small buildings heap'd about at all angles and all levels like an infant's blocks, and topp'd with a pleasing labyrinth of sharp gables, tall spires, and glittering vanes. Marblehead, indeed, was the scene of many romantick incidents; one of which concern'd Sir H: Frankland of Frankland-Hall, and was writ of by Dr. Holmes the poet. Over all the rest of the scene tower'd a hill on which the rude forefathers of the hamlet were laid to rest;

and which was in consequence nam'd Old Burying Hill. In subsequent years a newer part of the village rose across the bay, and became almost as great a watering-place as Bath or Brightelmstone. But the conservative temper of the old villagers excluded such invasions of their settled district, and produced the greatest modern miracle that hath ever met my gaze. The miracle is simply this: *that at the present moment the Georgian Marblehead of 1770 stands intact and unchanged!* I do not exaggerate. It is with calm assurance that I insist, that Gen. Washington cou'd tomorrow ride horseback down the long street nam'd for him without the least sensation of strangeness. Wires are few and inconspicuous. Tramway rails look like deep ruts. Costumes are not marked in the twilight. And on every hand stretch the endless rows of houses built betwixt 1640 and 1780—some even with overhanging gables—whilst both to north and south loom hills cover'd with crazy streets and alleys that Mr. Hogarth might have known and pourtray'd, had he but cross'd the ocean to discover them. It is a dream—a grotesque and unbelievable anachromism—an artist's or antiquarian's fancy stept out of his brain and fixt to earth for publick inspection. It *is* the 18th century. There are no modern shops or theatres, and no cinema show that I cou'd discover. The railway is so remote from the town-square, that its existence is forgotten. The shops have small windows, and the men are very old. Time passes softly and slowly there.

I came to Marblehead in the twilight, and gazed long upon its hoary magick. I threaded the tortuous, precipitous streets, some of which an horse can scarce climb, and in which two waggons cannot pass. I talked with old men and revell'd in old scenes, and climb'd pantingly over the crusted cliffs of snow to the windswept height where cold winds blew over desolate roofs and evil birds hovered over a bleak, deserted, frozen tarn. And atop all was the peak; Old Burying Hill, where the dark headstones clawed up thro' the virgin snow like the decay'd fingernails of some gigantick corpse.

Immemorial pinnacle of fabulous antiquity! As evening came I look'd down at the quiet village where the lights came out one by one; at the calm contemplative chimney-pots and antique gables silhouetted against the west; at the glimmering small-paned windows; at the silent and unillumined fort frowning formidably over the snug harbour where it hath frown'd since 1742, when 'twas put up for defence against the French King's frigates. Shades of the past! How compleat-

ly, O Mater Novanglia, am I moulded of thy venerable flesh and as one with thy century'd soul! God Save His Majesty, George the Third, and preserve his Province of the Massachusetts-Bay!

My return to the Providence-Plantations was accomplisht without any events more untoward than a delay of three hours occasion'd by a railway wreck at Readville; but I can never again have any considerable part in the thoughts of this decaying aera. *I have look'd upon Marble-head, and have walk'd waking in the streets of the 18th century.* And he who hath done that, can never more be a modern.

Believe me, Sir, to be yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servant
L: Theobald, Jun.

118. TO REINHARDT KLEINER

Jany. 25, 1923

Blest St. John:—

. . . . . In quitting these considerations of phantasy, I am mov'd to wonder why Mr. Ludlow found narcotick aid necessary to the perception of an ideal world of gorgeousness and sublimity. It seems to me, that a man of active imagination ought to be able to behold vividly before his closed eyes any vision whatever that his mind is capable of conceiving, independently of any external stimulation. I am sure that I have gazed on vistas as strange, as terrible, and as magnificent as most of Mr. Ludlow's; and all without having ever partaken of any drug or stimulant. It is my opinion, that most persons of ordinary cast depend too much upon the physical senses, to the neglect of those airier potentialities which are possesst by the unshackled fancy.

I am, Sir, yr. most oblig'd and obt. Servt.
Theobaldus

119. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Feb. 10, 1923

I have come to regard architecture and decoration as the greatest of all arts, since it is the least personal and least tainted with vulgar emotion. As I grow older, I see more and more clearly what utter damn nonsense and rubbish human ethics, aspirations, beliefs, and kindred illusions are. Nothing matters in a universe devoid of values or significance; and that art is the truest, which is *least connected with ideas or purposes or sentiments.* I am not sure but that uselessness and triviality are the basic essentials of real art—at any rate, I prefer that which is most frankly impersonal, decorative, and whimsical. Line and colour—that is all there is to life. I have ceased to admire character—all I now value in any man are his manners, accomplishments, and choice of cravats. I will admit, however, that there is a certain importance in the cut of one's hair and regularity of one's features. And so forth. The greatest historical tragedy of modern times was the fall of the periwig.

* * * * *

Anent the Fascist problem—assuredly we approach it from radically different directions. Galpinius and I have been discussing democracy a lot lately, and we agree that it is a false idol—a mere catchword and illusion of inferior classes, visionaries, and dying civilisations. Life has no ultimate values, and our proximate values can be little more than what we like to see or possess. "Right" and "wrong" are primitive conceptions which cannot endure the test of cold science. Now Galpin and I maintain that, logically, a man of taste should prefer such things as favour strong and advanced men at the expense of the herd. Of what use is it to please the herd? They are simply coarse animals—for all that is admirable in man is the artificial product of special breeding. We advocate the preservation of conditions favourable to the growth of beautiful things—imposing palaces, beautiful cities, elegant literature, resposeful art and music, and a physically select human type such as only luxury and a pure racial strain can produce. Thus we oppose de-

mocracy, if only because it would retard the development of a handsome Nordic breed. We realise that all conceptions of justice and ethics are mere prejudices and illusions—there is no earthly reason why the masses should not be kept down for the benefit of the strong, since everyman is for himself in the last analysis. We regard the rise of democratic ideas as a sign of cultural old age and decay, and deem it a compliment to such men as Mussolini when they are said to be "XVth century types." We are proud to be definitely *reactionary*, since only by a bold repudiation of the "liberal" pose and the "progress" illusion can we get the sort of authoritative social and political control which alone produces things which make life worth living. We admire the old German Empire, for it was a force so strong that it almost conquered all the combined forces of the rest of the world. Personally, my objection to Germany in the late war was that it formed a menace to our English Empire—an Empire so lamentably split in 1775-83, and so regrettably weakened by effeminate ideas of liberty. My wish was that we English reunite into one irresistible power and establish an hegemony of the globe in true Roman fashion. Neither we nor Germany will ever be really strong till we have unified imperial control.

Our modern worship of empty ideals is ludicrous. What does the condition of the rabble matter? All we need do is to keep it as quiet as we can. What is more important, is to perpetuate those things of beauty which are of real value because involving actual sense-impressions rather than vapid theories. "Equality" is a joke—but a great abbey or cathedral, covered with moss, is a poignant reality. If is for us to safeguard and preserve the conditions which produce great abbeys, and palaces, and picturesque walled towns, and vivid sky-lines of steeples and domes, and luxurious tapestries, and fascinating books, paintings, and statuary, and colossal organs and noble music, and dramatic deeds on embattled fields . . . *these are all there is of life;* taken them away and we have nothing which a man of taste or spirit would care to live for. Take them away and our poets have nothing to sing—our dreamers have nothing to dream about. The blood of a million men is well shed in producing one glorious legend which thrills posterity . . . and it is not at all important *why* it was shed. A coat of arms won in a crusade is worth a thousand slavering compliments bandied about amongst a rabble.

Reform? Pish! We do not *want* reform! What would the world be

without its scarlet and purple evil! Drama is born of conflict and violence . . . god! shall we ever be such women as to prefer the emasculate piping of an arbitrator to the lusty battle-cry of a blue-eyed, blond-bearded warrior? The one sound power in the world is the power of a hairy muscular right arm!

Yah! How I spit upon this rotton age with its feeble comforts and thwarted energies—its Freuds and Wilsons, Augustines and Heliogabali,—rabbles and perversions! What these swine with their scruples and problems, changes and rebellions, need, is a long draught of blood from a foeman's skull on the battlements of a mountain fortalice! We need fewer harps and viols, and more drums and brasses. The answer to jazz is the wild dance of the war-like conqueror! Don't complain of the youth's high-powered motor-car unless you can give him an horse and armour and send him to conquer the domains of the neighbouring kings! Modern life—my gawd! I don't wonder that literature is going to hell or chaos! What is there to write about now? Before we have *literature* we must have *life*—bold, colourful, primitive, and picturesque. We must change a George V for a Richard Coeur de Lion—a *Plantagenet!*

* * * * *

What we must do is to shake off our encumbering illusions and false values—banishing sonorous platitudes in a civilised realisation that the only things of value in the world are those which promote beauty, colour, interest, and heightened sensation. The one great crusade worthy of an enlightened man is that directed against whatever impoverishes imagination, wonder, sensation, dramatic life, and the appreciation of beauty. Nothing else matters. And not even this really matters in the great void, but it is amusing to play a little in the sun before the blind universe dispassionately pulverises us again into that primoridal nothingness from whence it moulded us for a second's sport.

Thus in aeternitate—Tibaldus.

120. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Old 598
Feby. 24, 1923

Hail, Odovakar, Fellow-Chieftain of the Goths!

Yes—I guess Ol' New-England can give the rest of America points on historic beauty. But OLD ENGLAND! Honestly, if I once saw its venerable oaks and abbeys, manor-houses and rose gardens, lanes and hedges, meadows and mediaeval villages, I could never return to America. The only reason that I don't save like hell to get in on Dench's tour is that I simply couldn't come back, once I saw the ancient glories and monuments of my race. I would jump in the Thames, the Cam, or the Isis; the Usk, the Ouse, or the Severn, first. When I see Old England at last, it must be as a son returning to his fathers, and I must be in a position to settle there for ever in peace and archaic dignity.

Thine—Tibaldus.

121. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Old 598
March 1st, 1923

Salve, Maxime!

This headache will kill either me, or the bird that has to wade through the incoherent paragraphs now unfolding their labyrinthine course! I can't sit up but a few minutes at a time, and there's more ?&%$:() beastly work here to do than a regiment could dispose of in a decade. Bah.

About that Cole mess——I'd better curl up with a bottle of cyanide and get it over with before I do any more harm to myself and others. Bah. Probably I've incurred his undying coldness—he hasn't answered that definitively declinatory epistle yet—and now Mrs. Adams writes that he'll probably be peeved at her! Undertaker, put a good shot of embalming fluid in the old simp's head—it's been dead a long time.

Tell Mrs. A.—though I'll answer her myself in a day or two—that I'll take all the Colic blame myself and exculpate her, and you, and everybody but poor me—in toto. He might as well be damn mad at one guy as half mad at several birds.

. . . . . If the National wants to be a catchall for the mob of grammar-school journalists and mail-order hounds, it can do so with my blessing after the first week in July—but that wasn't the way of the Old United. I now question whether such a society as that can permanently exist; and believe the only hope for amateur letters lies with a totally informal and unofficer'd group to be formed within any or all of the boy's-clubbish associations. And that is probably a vain hope. I hope Campbell and Daas will lead a movement for the revival of the United, but shall not do any more leading myself. I'm through with starting things—henceforward I'm merely a follower. They have my blessing and co-operation to a reasonable degree, but I can't make over an association single-handed. The United I knew doesn't exist today.

Honestly, my hatred of the human animal mounts by leaps and bounds the more I see of the damned vermin, and the more I see exemplified the workings of their spiteful, shabby, and sadistic psychological processes. Blessed is the plague, which with its divine and health-giving breath removes these putrescent superfluities by the thousand! Yah!

And damn this headache.

With renew'd assurances of that consideration which is warranted by the sincerest amity and respect, Believe me, Sir, ever

Yr. most oblig'd/Most obt: Servt:/Theobaldus

122. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Old Dump
8th March 1923
gawd knows whither!

Monarch of gods and daemons and all spirits!

Oh, yes . . . I'm really frightfully human and love all mankind, and all that sort of thing. Mankind is truly amusing, when kept at the proper distance. And common men, if well-behaved, are really quite useful. One is a cynick only when one thinks. At such times the herd

seems a bit disgusting because each member of it is always trying to hurt somebody else, or gloating because somebody else is hurt. Inflicting pain seems to be the chief sport of persons whose tastes and interests run to the ordinary events and direct pleasures and rewards of life—the animalistic or (if one may use a term so polluted with homiletick associatins) *worldly* people of our absurd civilisation. . . . . I may be human, all right, but not quite human enough to be glad at the misfortune of anybody. I am rather sorry (not outwardly but genuinely so) when disaster befalls a person—sorry because it gives the filthy herd so much pleasure. To be a real hater, one must hate *en masse*. I hate animals like the Hanghton rhinoceros mildly and temperately, but for mankind as mankind I have a most artistically fiery abhorrence and execration, I spit upon them!

The natural hatefulness and loathsomeness of the human beast may be overcome only in a few specimens of fine heredity and breeding, by a transference of interests to abstract spheres and a consequent sublimation of the universal sadistic fury. All that is good in man is artificial; and even that good is very slight and unstable, since nine out of ten non-primitive people proceed at once to capitalise their asceticism and vent their sadism by a Victorian brutality and scorn toward all who do not emulate their pose. Puritans are probably more contemptible than primitive beasts, though neither class deserves much respect. In fact, we find very little in human character to command our respect. That is why, since I like to respect people for my own quaint amusement, I invariably judge a man by his cravat. Cravats, I sometimes think, are the only true realities of life. And life is so earnest and serious!

. . . . .

This afternoon, I'm going to accompany my aunts to see Mr. Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, which I have not seen since I went to Drury Lane in 1777. . . .

Thine hble, and obt. Servt.
θεοβάλδος

123. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
March 25, 1923

My dear Smith:—

My card sent from Salem last month attempted in a feeble way to express the delirious delight & unboundedly enthusiastic admiration which *Ebony & Crystal* aroused in me. . . . It is genius, if genius ever existed! As I have said before, there is no author but yourself who seems to have glimpsed fully those tenebrous wastes, immensurable gulfs, grey topless pinnacles, crumbling corpses of forgotten cities, slimy, stagnant, cypress-bordered rivers, & alien, indefinable, antiquity-ridden gardens of strange decay, with which my own dreams have been crowded since earliest childhood. I read your work as the record of the only other human eye which has seen the things I have seen in far planets.

And the *Lurking Fear* illustrations! I have already told you how the gryphon gazing on the gulf impressed me, & now I have seen the third set—with that eldritch funereal forest of nameless vegetation. That drawing is wonderful—not only in the staggering conception, but in the almost diabolic technical skill—I can't say how much I envy you your pictorial as well as literary genius! I have not seen the fourth & final set, but await it with the keenest expectancy. Meanwhile I was delighted to see your portrait in the March *Home Brew*, & to gain an idea of the outward aspect of that *Emperor of Dreams* to whom I so gladly bow down. Certainly you look every inch the poet—which is not true of any other poet I know except Frank B. Long, Jr. . . .

* * * * *

. . . . . Cabell's work represents one of three distinct currents which I seem to discern in modern literature—i. e., the ironic juggling of the traditional images & language in a manner conformable to contemporary psychology. The other two currents are symbolic chaos, as in T. S. Eliot & the imagists, & stark, dreary realism as in Sherwood Anderson & Ben Hecht. I am fond of none of these things, though I recognise their purely intellectual superiority to Victorian mush.

* * * * *

The magnificence of *The Hashish-Eater* is beyond description—how

I wish the local printers had been able to include the bizarre *illustrations* which Loveman shewed me last summer! I delight in your use of the cosmos instead of merely the *world* as a background; you can't imagine—or then again, you probably *can*—the pictures that flit through my mind at lines like

". . . I know the blooms
Of bluish fungus, freak'd with mercury
That bloat within the craters of the moon,
And in one still selenic hour have shrunk
To pools of slime & foetor; & I know
What clammy blossoms, blanch's & cavern-grown,
Are proffer'd in Uranus* to their gods
By mole-eyed peoples. . . ."

* but isn't it U'-ra-nus?

or

". . . The blind
And worm-shape'd monsters of a sunless world,
With krakens of the ultimate abyss,
And demogorgons of the outer dark. . . ."

These images have a double appeal to me because *astronomy* has always been my favourite science, followed assiduously since I was twelve years old. I have seen the ringed Saturn through my own telescope, (a Bardon instrument with 3″ object-glass & eyepieces up to 150 diameters) & have gazed upon the moon's frightful abysses where no diffusing air softens the nighted blackness of distorted shadows. I wrote monthly astronomical articles for a Providence daily from the time I was 15 to a period only 5 years ago—when the paper was sold to the Democrats. I'll enclose one of the later articles, of which some duplicates encumber the rubbish-heaps hereabouts. You needn't return it. It has always been my intention to write a set of tales involving other planets—both of this system & of other stars—but I keep deferring the project because of its magnitude. I want the things to be the fruit of a mind stored with all the primordial, colourful, morbid, & grotesque lore of literature—& hitherto my reading has had some lamentable lacunae. I never got hold of *Vathek* till 1921, & all of Hoffman is still ahead of me.

The prose-poems in *E & C* are Cyclopean! I am especially fond of this literary form, & you have proved yourself its master. *The Flower Devil* drugs me to strange dreams, & *The Memnons of the Night* will never depart 'from the crypts of my memory.' Some of the images haunt me—"bat-like lilies that open their ribbed petals by night, & fasten with tiny yellow teeth on the bodies of sleeping dragon-flies." And then the verse . . . *Nightmare*. . . .

". . . Shapes . . .
With Gothic wings enormous arch'd the night."

But I could cover sheet after sheet with ebullient praise & yet fail to convey the extent of my admiration & appreciation. I read some of the pieces aloud to my aunt; & despite her general leaning toward the realists she could not escape the breathless spell of your cacodaemoniacal incantations, but ended up by becoming an admirer!

Most cordially & sincerely yours,
H P Lovecraft

124. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Old 598
March 25, 1923

Rain, Snow, and hail, your Mightiness!

The paramount end, aim, and object of life is contentment or tranquil pleasure; such as can be gained only by the worship and creation of beauty, and by the adoption of an imaginative and detached life which may enable us to appreciate the world as a beautiful object (as Schopenhauer tells us it is) without feeling too keenly the pain which inevitably results from reflecting on its relation to ourselves.

. . . . .

Thine ignominious helot—
ΘΕΟΒΑΛΔΟΣ
THEOBALDUS

125. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old 598
April 6, 1923

H'lo, Grandpa's Nice Boy!

To match the sore throat and general wretchedness which have disturb'd your programme, I can boast a continuous headache and a wretchedness equally general and extensive; which have reduced all my activities to an almost absolute standstill. I am opprest with languor and lethargy, and have no disposition to perform the multitude of tasks that confront me; besides which I am getting so monstrous fat that I know not what to do about collars and other clothing. I fear, Child, that you will scarce know your old grandpa when you behold him; tho' I will sign my name in your presence, so that my handwriting may establish my identity. I have not been outside the house since March eleventh, and have no energy or ambition to stir. . . .

But the event of events is the visit of my little grandson Belknap, which positively must take place! I am sure that your slumbers wou'd be promoted by the village breezes of late May; and if these zephyrs shou'd fail, I wou'd undertake to cure the most stubborn forms of your insomnia by reading to you some original compositions in the heroick couplet!

I appreciate immensely your invitation for me to reverse the order of the visitation, but believe it even more than usually impossible just now. My financial state is indescribable—Bush work hath been beyond the power of my nerves to accomplish, whilst expenses are unprecedented. For example—your own observation of my wardrobe (all of which you saw!) will at once convince you of the indisputable necessity of a new suit, if I am to move at all amongst civilised men. . . .

. . . . . In truth, Poe and Dunsany betwixt them say all that I have to say; so that my incentive to emulous composition can never be very great.

S'long, Sonny!
Grandpa.

126. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Old Dump
22 April 1923

Ave Maxime!

Hell! Work is my Nemesis! Having accumulated over *fifty* unanswer'd epistles, I'm trying to dispose of 'em at the rate of fifteen per diem, but am falling down on it. I could have done it once, but ten average specimens seems to be my limit now.

. . . . . In my preface to the *Inspiring Scenes* Thing, we find "Dillon's pleasing heights" (good Georgianism) debased to "Dillon's pleasant heights". (Nondescript banality.)

Also in my 1922 tribute—

"Gorgeous *be* they brother

sinks to "Gorgeous *by* thy brother sun". The way of the world! But I wish when they misprint they'd be truly incoherent, and not make a sort of feeble half-sense. I'd rather have *the* appear as *thx yhe*, than have *inane* appear as *insane*, or anything of that sort. This reminds me of what they did to poor Kleiner and me in the Dowe memorial. Kleiner had a line

"Beauty and joy *in* everything",

and they rendered it

"Beauty and joy *and* everything",

'n everything! Blah! Such is life! I had a line

"Unfeign'd the grief with which *the* gen'ral heart"

and they gave it

"Unfeign'd the grief with which *each* gen'eral heart"

yah! Grrr! . . .

. . . . . All I want now is to settle down in a comfortable middle-aged way with my reading and authorship, revision when necessary, and the correspondence of a few particularly congenial friends. The turmoil and technicality of associational machinations have become so disgust-

ing and irksome to me, that I shall never again come into contact with them save as an especial favour now and then to some more than ordinarily valued friend. The 1914-1922 chapter of spontaneous activity is closed. I'm now too thoroughly cynical to expect much of amateurdom, or to give many damns about it; save as a perpetually chaotic mess from which a few odd souls can get some impetus toward literary development . . . , or at least toward a fairly comfortable literary dissillusion.

. . . . .

With appropriate congratulations, commiserations, etc. I am Ever yr. most oblig'd, most obt. Servt.

Tibaldus

127. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG AND ALFRED GALPIN

598 Angell Street
Providence, R.I.
May 1, 1923

My dear Little Grandchildren:—

The meeting dispers'd without overt violence at about 11 p. m., and I accompany'd the Parker-Miniter delegation to their modest abode. There, after a conversational session with my joint hosts which lasted nearly till morning, I retir'd early and slept soundly; dreaming mainly of "Victory", the six-weeks-old kitten who had sat, squirm'd, or scratch'd in my lap during the entire period. Victory was born March first, and is the most engaging mite I have beheld in years. He climb'd over the entire area of his aged and adipose Grandpa, and finally settled on the back of the Old Gentleman's neck as an ideal sleeping-porch. . . .

Arriv'd in Salem, I stroll'd a while through the venerable streets, and finally embark'd for Danvers—call'd "Salem-Village" in the 17th century, and forming the seat of most of the witchcraft cases of 1692. The coach ride was delightful, giving frequent glimpses of ancient houses in a fashion to stimulate the antiquarian soul. Suddenly, at a graceful and shady village corner which the coach was about to turn, I beheld the tall chimneys and ivy'd walls of a splendid brick house of

later Colonial design, and espy'd a sign which proclaim'd it open for publick inspection. Captivated by the sight, I signall'd the driver and alighted; determin'd to add an item to my Colonial itinerary. Inform'd by the sign that this was the Capt. Samuel Fowler house, built 1809, accessible for eightpence, and the property of the Society for the Preservation of New-England Antiquities, I loudly sounded the knocker and awaited developments. Nothing develop'd. I then knock'd at the side door, but with equal futility. Then I noted a door half open in a miserable "ell" at the back of the house; and believing the place tenanted, made a third trial there.

My summons was answer'd simultaneously by two of the most pitiful and decrepit-looking persons imaginable—hideous old women more sinister than the witches of 1692, and certainly not under eighty. For a moment I believ'd them to be Salem witches in truth; for the peculiarly sardonick face of one of them, with furtive eyes, sneering lips, and a conspicuously undershot lower jaw, intensify'd the impression produc'd by their incredible age and gauntness, and the utterly nondescript bundles of brownish rags which form'd their attire. The "ell" in which they dwelt was in a state of indescribable squalor; with heaps of rags, books, cooking utensils, and the like on every hand. One meagre wood stove fail'd altogether to heat the barren room against the cold of that sharp afternoon. The smaller, and probably older, of the two spoke first—in a hoarse rattleing voice that dimly suggested death, and that was occasionally halted by a curious gutteral impediment. This was the crone who did not have the corpse-like sneer—but what a study they wou'd both have made for a Poe, a Baudelaire, or a Goya! If, however, their weird aspect and hideous squalor were sinister; what can one say of the *contrast* involv'd when the guttural salutation of the speaker became intelligible? For despite the omnipresent evidences of a slatternly decadence beyond words, this ancient witch was mumbling forth a courtly and aristocratick welcome in language and accents beyond question bespeaking the gentlest birth and proudest cultivation! The witch apologised for the unfavourable conditions prevailing, and lamented that she had not heard my knocking at the front door of the mansion proper. There was, she coughed in explanation, not enough fuel to heat the mansion; so she and her sister had to dwell in the wooden "ell" once used as a shed and storehouse. But in summer, indeed, they dwelt in the mansion—for was it not their own by inheritance, and had they not been born in one of its upper rooms? Yes—it was the old, old

New-England story of family decay and aristocratick pauperism—a case like that of the poor Salem Nicholses, but infinitely worse. These tatter'd ancients were the Misses Fowler, own granddaughters of the proud seafarer and fighter who in his dashing prime had built that house for the comfort, dignity, and splendour of his descendants. Short-sighted man! Had he but foreseen the depths to which those descendants would be driven! To think of their rags and kennel, and of his fastidious elegance in demanding the best French wall-paper, the finest brass latches, the choicest carved mantels, cornices, and wainscoting, and the most delicate silver, china, and ornaments that both Europe and America cou'd furnish! 1809-1923—one hundred and fourteen years of slow, insidious decay. In the veins of those terrible wrecks—last of their line—flows the mingled blood of all that was proudest in the Salem region—Endecotts who boasted the first Colonial governor, Fowlers who were known the seven seas over, Pickmans who bowed only to those whom they thought worthy, Ropeses whose halls were portrait-galleries of great ancestors, Pages who live in history . . . the great-grandmother of these poor relics was that sprightly Mrs. Page who, at the time of the Colonial tea agitation, serv'd her guests with the beverage *on the roof* after her husband had forbidden her to serve it *under his roof*. Such is the dying New-England of today—a whole section's tragedy was epitomised when these unfortunate survivors paus'd beneath an oaken frame and amidst their tatters hoarsely call'd attention to the coat-of-arms which bespoke the haughty gentility of the Fowler blood. The house is finely preserv'd and restor'd, having been purchas'd from the aged sisters at their frantick request by the Society for the Preservation of New-England Antiquities. The Society hath given them the care of it for the pitiful remainder of their lives—as is the custom of such societies when dealing with such cases—but it has not money enough to keep them in food, fuel, and clothing. Still—it is better then the almshouse. The lives of the sisters is not wholly dull, for many intelligent persons come to see the house and its marvellous interior. The day before I was there, an architect from New-York had been over the place, and had copy'd many of the priceless Colonial designs for modern use. Fallen New-England! And yet how great were thine ancient glories! Who today cou'd create such things of beauty as the carvings of Salem craftsmen, the plate of Boston silversmiths, or the designs of classick architects all over the several

provinces? Golden 18th century! It is not in jest that I hail thee as the age of universal taste and vigour! Led by the Sibylline wraiths of decay'd gentry, I explor'd the house from cellar to attick. Its decorations are of unrivall'd beauty, and its furniture, ornaments, china, and silver, are beyond description. Fine ancestral portraits, old garments of great richness, priceless laces and other Colonial remnants of domesticity—all these recall uncannily a bygone prosperity which the present mocks. I was allow'd to don a cap which Captain Fowler wore in the War of 1812, and a civilian swallow-tail coat of the same period—a cream-colour'd dress garment which fitted me finely, and shew'd that the good captain was as stout an old gentleman as your grandpa. Finally I left—pressing upon my pathetick hostesses the admission fee which they sought to refuse in a last gesture of reminiscent aristocracy.

I now put the aera of Colonial refinement behind me, and hark'd back farther still to an age of darker and weirder appeal—the age of the dreaded witchcraft. Leaving Danvers, I struck out along the roads and across the fields toward the lone farmhouse built by Townsend Bishop in 1636, and in 1692 inhabited by the worthy and inoffensive old widow Rebekah Nurse, who was seventy years of age and wished no one harm. Accused by the superstitious West-Indian slave woman Tituba (who belong'd to the Reverend Samuel Parris and who caus'd the entire wave of delusion) of bewitching children, and denounc'd blindly by some of the hysterical children in question. Goodwife Nurse was arrested and brought to trial. Thirty-nine persons sign'd a paper attesting to her blameless conduct, and a jury render'd a verdict of "not guilty"; but popular clamour led the judges to reverse the verdict, (as was then possible) and on July 19, 1692 the poor old grandam was hang'd on Gallows Hill in Salem for a mythological crime. Her remains were brought back from Salem and interr'd in the family burying-ground—a ghoulish place shadow'd by huge pines and at some distance from the house. In 1885 a monument was erected to her memory, bearing an inscription by the poet Whittier.

As I approach'd the spot to which I had been directed, after passing through the hamlet of Tapleyville, the afternoon sun was very low. Soon the houses thinn'd out; so that on my right were only the hilly fields of stubble, and occasional crooked trees clawing at the sky. Beyond a low crest a thick group of spectral boughs bespoke some kind of grove or orchard—and in the midst of this group I suddenly descry'd

the rising outline of a massive and ancient chimney. Presently, as I advanced, I saw the top of a grey, drear, sloping roof—sinister in its distant setting of bleak hillside and leafless grove, and unmistakably belonging to the haunted edifice I sought. Another turn—a gradual ascent—and I beheld in full view the sprawling, tree-shadow'd house which had for nearly three hundred years brooded over those hills and held such secrets as men may only guess. Like all old farmhouses of the region, the Nurse cottage faces the warm south and slopes low toward the north. It fronts on an ancient garden, where in their season gay blossoms flaunt themselves against the grim, nail-studded door and the vertical sundial above it. That sundial was long concealed by the overlaid clapboards of gothick generations, but came to light when the house was restored to original form by the memorial society which owns it. Everything about the place is ancient—even to the tiny-paned lattice windows which open outward on hinges. The atmosphere of witchcraft days broods heavily upon that low hilltop.

My rap at the ancient door brought the caretaker's wife, an elderly unimaginative person with no appreciation of the dark glamour of the ancient scene. This family live in a lean-to west of the main structure—an addition probably one hundred years less ancient than the parent edifice. I was the first visitor of the 1923 season, and took pride in signing my name at the top of the register. Entering, I found myself in a low, dark passage whose massive beams almost touched my head; and passing on, I travers'd the two immense rooms on the ground floor—sombre, barren, panell'd apartments with colossal fireplaces in the vast central chimney, and with occasional pieces of the plain, heavy furniture and primitive farm and domestick utensils of the ancient yeomanry. In these wide, low-pitch'd rooms a spectral menace broods —for to my imagination the seventeenth century is as full of macabre mystery, repression, and ghoulish adumbrations as the eighteenth century is full of taste, gayety, grace, and beauty. This was a typical Puritan abode; where amidst the bare, ugly necessities of life, and without learning, beauty, culture, freedom, or ornament, terrible stern-fac'd folk in conical hats or poke-bonnets dwelt two hundred fifty and more years ago—close to the soil and all its hideous whisperings; warp'd in mentality by isolation and unnatural thoughts, and shivering in fear of the devil on autumn nights when the wind howl'd through the twisted orchard trees or rustled the hideous corpse-nourish'd pines in the graveyard at the foot of the hill. There is eldritch fascination—horrible bury'd evil—in these archaick farmhouses. After seeing them, and smelling the odour of centuries in their walls, one hesitates to read certain passages in Cotton Mather's strange old *Magnalia* (which you, little Belknap, shall see when you come to visit your old grandpa) after dark. After exploring the ground floor I crept up the black crooked stairs and examin'd the bleak chambers above. The furniture was as ugly as that below, and included a small trundle-bed in which infant Puritans (even as you, children) were lull'd to sleep with meaningless prayers and morbid hints of daemons riding the night-wind outside the small-paned lattice-windows. Poor little creatures! No wonder there were very few Alfredi or Belnapii amongst them—what artistick or intellectual mind cou'd survive so stultifying an environment? It was the somewhat more civilised class in the larger towns, and the newer colonists from Mother England, (GOD SAVE THE KING!) who in the next century burst forth into the sublimation of beauty which is Colonial architecture and decoration. That was New-England's one gift to the fine arts—and a magnificent gift it was. But still the old Rebekah Nurse house broods and leers on its ancient hill. I saw old Rebekah's favourite chair, where she used to sit and spin before the Salem magistrates dragged her to the gallows. And the sunset wind whistled in the colossal chimney, and the ghouls rattled ghastly skeletons from unseen attic rafters overhead. Though it was not suppos'd to be open to the publick, I persuaded the caretaker to let me ascend to that hideous garret of century'd secrets. Thick dust cover'd everything, and unnatural shapes loom'd on everyhand as the evening twilight oozed through the little blear'd panes of the ancient windows. I saw something hanging from the wormy ridge-pole—something that sway'd as if in unison with the vesper breeze outside, though that breeze had no access to this funeral and forgotten place—shadows . . . shadows . . . shadows . . . And I descended from that accursed garret of palaeogean arcana, and left that portentous abode of antiquity; left it and went down the hill to the graveyard under the shocking pines, where twilight show'd sinister slabs and rusty bits of fallen iron fence, and where something squatted in shadow on a monument—something that made me climb the hill again, hurry shudderingly past the venerable house, and descend the opposite slope to Tapleyville as night came. . . . . .

Dawn of Saturday! I was up betimes, and ate breakfast with Victory

climbing sportively all over me. Near the close of the meal, my young friend essayed a journey from the floor up my leg and chest to his chosen perch behind my neck; but as he near'd the summit he unwisely chose the lace ruffles of my shirt instead of my brocade waistcoat or velvet coat as a handhold. Unponderous as he was with his meer mouth and a half of terrestrial entity, the dubious fabrick of the too-often-launder'd garment was not enough to sustain him—and down he went, leaving an aching void in my aged bosom!! Not that he was hurt—bless my soul! . . . the mite was kicking and rolling about gleefully in my lap before I knew what had happen'd—but that aching void was in a place which neither suit nor cravat cou'd cover, and in my attempt to "travel light" I had provided no other shirt! Eheu! And when I sought to bunch the place and fix it with pins, my fingers made new rents! No use—the old rag had reach'd the end of its rope—and it had to choose a place like Malden for the grand finale! Well—the only solution was a new shirt, so after bidding my hosts adieu, and running off a page of the new HUB CLUB QUILL on Parker's press, (it took three trials to shew me the knack of feeding and pedalling the confounded thing) I beat it for Boston, where I stock'd up at a linen-draper's and threw the old outfit away. I could not find anything antient enough exactly to suit me—the new shirt hath cheviot fabrick and turn'd-back soft cuffs—but any port in a storm. So, duly garb'd, I took the coach for Haverhill and was there by mid-afternoon.

Transferring to the Merrimack coach, and speeding toward the abode of my great-grandchild Davis, whom I was to visit, I pass'd Whittier's birthplace (built 1688 by his ancestor Tho: Whittier, inhabited by the poet till 1837, and scene of *Snow-Bound*) and beheld a region of delightful scenery. The trip was not long, and I soon alighted by the large early Victorian house in sleepy Main-Street which shelters the youthful near-Galba and his family. Edgar himself answer'd the door, and lo! I found him in his first suit with long trousers! How you children do grow! His fifteenth birthday occurr'd a week ago last Friday, and he is consuming the second year of high-school as a pure pleasure. . . .

* * * * *

Timothy Dexter—or Lord Timothy Dexter, as he lov'd to be call'd—died 117 years ago, but is still the principal topick of interest in Newburyport. His fame, indeed, went far beyond his native shoars; and you children have probably heard of him as the man who was jested into buying warming-pans to export to tropical Cuba, yet who made a fortune with them because the Cubans eagerly bought them as molasses ladles; who was trick'd into buying some useless whalebone, yet who made another fortune with that because of the rise of a new fashion which put the commodity in demand; who stock'd his cellar with needless provisions in expectation of a visit from the heirs of the murder'd Louis XVI, whom he had spectacularly invited to live in his mansion; yet who sold those provisions at an handsome profit when the visit fail'd to materialise. "Lord" Timothy is a semi-legendary figure, and New-England will never forget him!

In 1796, stung by the ridicule of the publick, Dexter publish'd what was probably America's queerest book—Bush's *Peace Poems and Sausages* not excepted. This hilarious pamphlet, intitul'd *A Pickle for the Knowing Ones,* consisted of odd scraps of Dexter's views on everything under the sun; together with some sharp rebukes of the inquisitive Newburyporters who gossip'd about how he made his money. It is here that he told the warming-pan and whalebone stories which are so famous, yet which are set down by modern criticks as meer fabrications of Dexter's odd ironick humour.

Yr. most aff: ancestor and obt: Servt:
GRANDPA THEOBALD

128. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Old Roost
Thursday the Third, May 1923

Most Sovran Citizen: —

Ecce! Grandpa Theobald is articulate, though damn near all in with a sort of beastly near-grippe which has made me nearly *stone deaf* for a week and a half, and play'd gawd's own deuce with my digestion. The only faculty left unimpair'd is my profane contempt for all creation. Bah. Meanwhile my small child Alfredus has come finely out of the appendicitis operation, with fourteen stitches and a cheerful serenity of temper.

. . . . . Wilde said life was Grecian whilst death was Gothick, but I think he exaggerated. I find life so tediously Alexanderian! . . . or even Byzantine. . . .

. . . . . Once again I've followed a Mortonian tip, as I did when sending *Dagon* to the *Black Cat* and *The Tomb* to the *Black Mask*, and have slipped *Weird Tales* five of my hell-beaters . . . *Dagon*, *Randolph Carter*, *Cats of Ulthar*, *Hound*, and *Arthur Jermyn*. And what I'm betting is that the editor (like those of the tenebrous feline and falseface) doesn't bother to write a personal letter to accompany the returning manuscripts. . . .

When I took the N.G.P.A. executiveship, it was when the blamed thing was down . . . I didn't wait till George had done it . . . (either way!) But as I've more recently said—I shan't do anything in the *United* myself, or ask anybody else to, until I see more evidences of a real movement to smoke out these damned wood lice.

As my term of servitude draws to a close, I begin to feel the exhilaration of approaching fossildom . . . long nights of uninterrupted reading, when I shall slither and wallow in all the diseased and unnatural horrors of nether hells with the putrid and sadistic authors of my choosing—or when, these tame literateurs proving as insipid as a mere Huysmans or Baudelaire, I shall seize a pen made of a condor's wing and dipped in carbonaceous putrescence, and leave on yellow pages a trail of ideographick foetor which shall be to their superficial dabblings as Poe is to Frances Hodgson Burnett. . . .

Speaking of authorship—lamp the enclosed panegyrick delivered on the coming-of-age of our tiny pal Belnapius! 'Ittle-Sonny says he likes it, and is glad his old grandpa did it in a Poe-esque rather than Papal style. Incidentally—Sonny's coming to Providence to see the Old Gentlemen this month or next—we've both been urging each other to visit each other; and since my brokeness proved the more absolute, Grandpa's Pet said he'd give in and do the choo-choo work himself. The arrangement will have advantages—for I can shew the child our old Athenaeum, where Poe spent many an hour, and wrote his name at the bottom of one of his unsigned poems in a magazine, and the house of Mrs. Whitman, where he spouted enough cheap sentimentality to make up for the amount he mercifully omitted from his tales. . . .

S'long

θεοβάλδος

THEOBALDUS

129. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old Men's Home
13 May—1923

Hello, Sonny!

I sent *Dagon*, *Arthur Jermyn*, *Cats of Ulthar*, *Hound*, and *Randolph Carter* to *Weird Tales*. The editor reply'd that he liked them, but could not consider their acceptance till I sent them in double-spaced typing. I am not certain whether or not I shall bother. I neeed the money badly enough—but ugh! how I hate typing! Mayhap I'll try *Dagon* alone—following with others only in case of definite acceptance. I abhor labour.

In a couple of weeks I hope to see a dark and sinister little Italian poisoner playing around his Grandpa's hearthstone! It's a damn shame you don't sleep well away from home—but I can't help thinking you can do so here; in a cosy room far upstairs and away from all the world, where you can shut out all distracting influences and stay atop the hill of dreams as long in the morning as you like. 'Tis an easy household! I couldn't sleep away from home till quite lately, but repeated visits gradually enabled me to do so. 'Twill be the same with you, I fancy. Tell Grandpa when you're coming, how long you can stay, and what you'd like to do. Don't hesitate to veto any plan of the Old Gentleman's which may seem too strenuous or boresome for very young Latins, for Grandpa aims to please! Would you like to see the Bostonians—or some of them? And how about Salem and Marblehead? Maybe we'll try ancient Plymouth, which I have never seen, thus voyaging as equals in ignorance, rather than as guide and novice. But all depends on your own inclination. Anyhow, I'll promise not to overwalk you!

. . . . . Nothing must disturb my undfluted Englishry—God Save the King! I am naturally a Nordic—a chalk-white, bulky Teuton of the Scandinavian or North-German forests—a Viking—a berserk killer—a predatory rover of the blood of Hengist and Horsa—a conqueror of Celts and mongrels and founder of Empires—a son of the thunders and the arctic winds, and brother to the frosts and the auroras—a drinker of foemen's blood from new-picked skulls—a friend of the mountain buzzards and feeder of seacoast vultures—a

blond beast of eternal snows and frozen oceans—a prayer to Thor and Woden and Alfadur, and raucous shouter of Niffleheim—a comrade of the wolves, and rider of nightmares—aye—I speak truly—for was I not born with yellow hair and blue eyes—the latter not turning dark till I was nearly two, and the former lasting till I was over five? Ho, for the hunting and fishing of Valhalla! Or who knows . . . ? The Phillipses come from the borderland of Wales, that mystic Machenian land. May there not be in them some trace of blood from some ROMAN prepraetor of Britannia Secunda, whose capital was Isca Silurum with its walls, its noble amphitheatre, its Etruscan-columned Temple of Diana, its Pons Saturni, its tessellated pavements, its inscriptions of the Septimii Severi, its Via Nympharum and Via Julia, . . . Io triumphe! S.P.Q.R.!! . . . Yes, Sonny, the Mediterranean world isn't so bad when one goes back to Pelasgic times and takes the Graeco-Roman races! After all, I *have* dark hair and eyes now, no matter what I used to have; and it is quite as good to be a sanguinary Roman consul as a Norse pirate. Long live the Pantheon! Vivat M. Agrippa! By being a Roman, I can quite logically prove a good grandfather to such as my small boys Belnapius and Alfredus . . . Latins all! But as a classical and ancient Latin, I enjoy *cheese,* which was a leading feature of Graeco-Roman diet. Therein our souls are separated by the impassable gulf of the Dark Ages, O Francesco Borgia, Prince of Arsenic-Sharks and Stiletto-Hounds!

* * * * *

Goya? Yes, child, I must learn of him. Undoubtedly he is akin to the horror I relish, though as yet pictorial art is remoter than literary art from my centres of consciousness. Then, again, I am not sure how well I like the *thickly laid on* horror of the actually decadent masters. Somebody I am not so much thrilled by a visible charnel house or conclave of daemons, as I am by the *suspicion* that a charnel vault exists below an immemorially ancient castle, or that a certain very old man has taken part in a daemoniac conclave fifty years ago. I crave the ethereal, the remote, the shadowy, and the doubtful—more and more I detest life and all connected with it, and long for such nebulous realms of spirit as only a Machen or a Dunsany can evoke. I believe Mortonius is right in considering me no true decadent, for much that decadents

love seems to me either absurd or merely disgusting. What I am, is a hater of actuality—an enemy to time and space, law and necessity. I crave a world of gorgeous and gigantic mystery, splendour, and terror, in which reigns no limitation save that of the untrammelled imagination. Physical life and experience, with the narrowings of artistic vision they create in the majority, are the objects of my most profound contempt. It is for this reason that I despise Bohemians, who think it essential to art to lead wild lives. My loathing is not from the standpoint of Puritan morality, but from that of aesthetic independence—I revolt at the notion that physical life is of any value or significance. To me the ideal artist is a gentleman who shows his contempt for life by continuing in the quiet ways of his ancestors, leaving his fancy free to explore refulgent and amazing spheres. Likewise, I would have an author ignore altogether his age and the public, creating art not for fame or for others, but for his own satisfaction alone.

So long—

Theobaldus Senex

130. TO JAMES F. MORTON

The Ol' Shack
May 17, 1923

Ave, Illustrissime!

Hell, what a week! Grippe has me for fair, and I'm three-fourths deaf, one-eighth paralysed, one sixteenth febrile . . . but gawd!

As for *Weird Tales*—Bro. Baird handed me a bit of a novelty by sending a personal spiel. He says that if I'll re-type the stuff in *double-spaced* form he'll consider acceptance . . . but that's too indefinite to get me enthusiastic. Yah! how I hate typing! But I'm so damn hard up I may try *one* as a gamble . . . *Dagon,* I guess. . . . And if he doesn't accept that he knows where he can go!

Theobaldus

131. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Main Street
26 May 1923

'Lo, Sonny!

Well, Grandpa's going to see an ear specialist today! Been putting it off a couple of weeks, and now my tyrannick aunt is dragging me by the hair—what's left of it—of my aged head! I'm not at all sure this deafness isn't permanent—happy thought!

Yes—Kleiner spoke of his pleasure at having a gifted young antagonist to argue about *The Waste Land* with! Bring the book when you come, Sonny—Grandpa wants to see the *notes*, what ain't in the *Dial*. I fear I should have been on RK's side had I dropped in at the Hell's Kitchen rookery—well, maybe I'll convince you when I corner you here! You see, I'm *deaf* but not *dumb*—I can put across all my arguments without being affected by yours . . . Shantih! Shantih! Shantih! (Say, what does that d—d *Shantih* mean, anyway? I think it's Sanscrit or something of the sort—the notes must tell or at least modernistically hint what it is.) . . .

. . . . . I have a high respect for these moderns as *philosophers and intellectuals*, however much I may dismiss and disregard them *as poets*. T. S. Eliot himself is an acute *thinker*—but I do not believe he is an *artist*. An artist must be always a child—that's why I tell you never to grow up!—and live in dreams and wonder and moonlight. He must think of the lives and colours of things—of life itself—and never stop to pick the glittering fabric to pieces. Alas! Who ever caught and dissected the sunset gold without losing it?

As to this new illusion business—bless me, child! I don't know! It looks to me as if the task of art were to forget and etherealise, and I doubt if it need bother with reality except to avoid building seriously on ideas which are passing. But if, like the truest art, it keeps comparatively free from ideas and confines itself to images, it will have less to reconstruct when ideas change. Ideas are very foolish—they mean nothing and lead nowhere. Rest, beauty, tranquility—these only have value.

Well—be Grandpa's nice boy!

H. P.

132. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Down on the Farm
26 May, 1923

Doctissime et Oroatissime:—

. . . . . I have no opinions—I believe in nothing—but assume for the time whatever opinion amuses me or is opposite to that of the person or persons present. Ho, hum! My cynicism and scepticism are increasing, and from an entirely new cause—the Einstein theory. The latest eclipse observations seem to place this system among the facts which cannot be dismissed, and assumedly it removes the last hold which reality or the universe can have on the independent mind. All is chance, accident, and ephemeral illusion—a fly may be greater than Arcturus, and Durfee Hill may surpass Mount Everest—assuming them to be removed from the present planet and differently environed in the continuum of space-time. There are no values in all infinity—the least idea that there are is the supreme mockery of all. All the cosmos is a jest, and fit to be treated only as a jest, and one thing is as true as another. I believe everything and nothing—for all is chaos, always has been, and always will be. Ease, amusement—these are the only relative qualities fit to be classed as values. . . .

θεοβάλδος

133. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Headquarters Unchanged
29 May, 1923

Ecce!

Well, Baird took *Dagon* after all, and wants more from his Grandpa Theobald's pen! *Dagon* will appear in the July *Weird Tales*, and a cheque will amble hitherward about that time. Baird doesn't let on how much it is—but I guess not much. Still—every little bit helps, and I guess I'll type another yarn before long. . . .

Oh—I went to the specialist—and lo! I can hear once more! He

found a lump of hardened wax below the vision and beyond the conjecture of the simp that gave it the once-over early this month, and after its removal the ol' receivin' set made a quick curve back to normalcy! . . . Ho, hum! But it is a frightful bore to hear again—the world sounds so beastly commonplace! I miss the detachment and exoticism of deafness . . . in my ears there sounded the surge of strange tides lapping the golden shores of unimagin'd worlds, and the shrill cries of grotesque paraqueets whose scarlet and orange plumes flashed weirdly through the tropic forests of luxuriant fancy. And now the bally clocks, and tram-cars, and wagons, and motors, and all that sort of thing. Bah!

Theobaldus

134. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old 598
June 3, 1923

Hello, Sonny!

Well, Grandpa isn't deaf any more! The specialist found some hidden wax far, far down, pressing on the drum; and having remov'd it, left the ear free for quick recovery. But I miss my deafness—such aloofness from the world, and such unearthly sounds . . . the roar of cryptic cataracts and floods in Saturn, and the screaming of red and gold paraqueets in odorous palm forests on unimaginable isles of blue, sunny seas! Oh, well—all things pass!

. . . . . I have been studying in some detail the growth of Old Providence, and re-creating in fancy its several aspects from its founding in 1636 to the rise of debased 19th century architecture in 1835 or thereabouts. It is truly a beautiful town, and I can see in vision the panorama of 1780 or 1790, when beautiful spires and stately mansions looked down on a picturesque hill covered with quaint houses with small-paned windows and peaked or gambrel roofs, and relieved by occasional publick buildings of Georgian brick architecture. The gold sun shone on a fair expanse of white and red houses and green foliage, and crystal blue here and there as the peaceful cove (now filled in) flashed and the movements of the crowded sloops and full-rigg'd ships by the

Great Bridge disclosed bits of the harbour waters. And the best part of it is, that a goodly proportion of the old houses and steeples and mansions are still standing! Some of the streets are very old. My own Angell Street antedates the white man, since it is the ancient Wampanoag Trail from the Weybosset ford in the Great Salt River to the Narrow Passage in the Seekonk, connecting the main Pequot Path with the trail to the Cape Cod country. That Pequot Path is now Weybosset Street, a great thoroughfare in the business section, and the ford is the Great Bridge. The original "Towne Streete" is that which runs North and South at the foot of the great east side hill. Here (1646) business first clustered around Goodman John Smith's grist mill at the north end near the lower falls of the Mooshasuck; but about 1690 it had moved a mile south, to where Pardon Tillinghast, Esq., had built a wharf and warehouse in 1681, and where he had been so widely emulated that Providence in three years had acquired one of the busiest waterfronts and leading shipping trades in New-England. Ah, me, how the Old Man rambles! Yes, Child, I am gradually receding into the past among dreams of antique Providence! The only excursion which my finances are likely to make possible is that to Concord and Lexington—those harbours of Yankee sedition—which I shall take if Cole invites me next week as he thought he would last month. It is fortunate for me that I dwell near those antiquities which form so essential a part of my existence. The past! How lovely a vision! GOD SAVE THE KING!

* * * * *

Weird Tales did accept *Dagon,* which will appear in the July issue. The editor says he wants more—and I shall probably re-type some things for him if the *Dagon* cheque (to come when the story appears) is large enough to make it worth my while. Why not try something of yours on this publication? The chances for acceptance would seem excellent. I told the editor about Clark Ashton, and sent some specimen poems—which latter impressed him so much that he has broken his rule not to print poetry, and is writing the Californian genius.

And I have read *The Hill of Dreams!!* Surely a masterpiece—though I hope it isn't quite as autobiographical as some reviewers claim. I'd hate to think of Machen himself as that young neurotic with his sloppy sentimentalities, his couch of thorns, his urban eccentric-

ities, and all that! But Pegāna, what an imagination! Cut out the emotional hysteria, and you have a marvellously appealing character—how vivid is that exquisite Roman day-dreaming! . . . even if the *spirit* is sadly un-Roman. Machen is a Titan—perhaps the greatest living author—and I must read everything of his. But *Dunsany* is closer to my own personality and understanding. Machen has an hysterical intensity which I neither experience nor understand—a seriousness which is a philosophical limitation. But Dunsany *is myself*, plus an art and cultivation infinitely greater. His cosmic realm is the realm in which I live; his distant, emotionless vistas of the beauty of moonlight on quaint and ancient roofs are the vistas I know and cherish.

Well—be a good boy!
—Grandpa

135. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

June 23, 1923

Hello, Sonny!

Well, bless my little boy! Did he think his poor old Grandpa was dead or something? Alas, no such luck! Instead, the old gentleman is still tottering about in the aimless world, though with so little energy after an exhausting Massachusetts trip that all correspondence is hopelessly piled up.

My aunt received your mother's reply to her letter, and was duly delighted. I believe she plans to respond at no distant date. Hope was expressed in this correspondence that a certain little boy might stop off on his way to Maine to see his aged Grandpa, and I fervently trust that hope was not totally without foundation. Truly, Sonny, Providence is such a dead town that you can't find any trouble sleeping. Everybody sleeps all day from the Aratex north, and at night there's no noise until the roosters begin to crow. You can even hear the grass growing betwixt the cobblestones (laid 1762) of Main Street. And there are ghosts of the past—calm, Colonial, benevolent, soporific ghosts—that soothe little Renaissance boys to sleep before they know it.

And you should see our Little Italy on Federal Hill!

* * * * *

The next morning, after more boresome talk, I proceeded by trams cars to eternally magical MARBLEHEAD. This time the Lee Mansion was open, and I came nigh to fainting at its sheer BRITANNICK magnificence. No fumbling provincial workmanship here, but sumptuous carvings, mantels, balustrades, and wainscotting, made by the finest artisans of OLD ENGLAND, and wrought in solid mahogany. You must see them, Sonny! The luxuriously *perfect* artistry of *every* line of this classical abode leaves the spectator virtually breathless! . . . GOD SAVE THE KING! The old couple who serve as caretakers are ancient Marbleheaders, and exceeding well-inform'd. Fancy my astonishment when I learnt from them, *that I had not seen the best and quaintest part of M'head at all;* this part being situate on the hill, betwixt Abbott Hall and the harbour.

The rest of the trip is poetry. I walk'd, insensible of fatigue, amidst strange realms of the half-forgotten past, and only afterward realized how sadly I overdid. Up—up—up—the narrow unpav'd hilly street to Daedalian convolutions of antediluvian byways, courts, and alleys, without sidewalks, lights, or plumbing, and with row on row of ancient Colonial doorways separated from the roadway only by rough doorsteps or iron-railed flights of steps—or sometimes by rough terraces or bushy growths of grass and weeds thro' which lean cats stalk'd. Precipitous hills just as they were 200 years ago—mossy embankments of great stones which knew the reigns of King William and Queen Anne—houses perch'd on perpendicular acclivities and venerable crags—alleys that are archaic staircases of unhewnstone—Mehercule! I cannot *tell* it, but have to *sing* it! I saw the home of Gen'l Clover, the rebel who mann'd the boats that carry'd the Yankees from the island to the mainland in their retreat from the Battel of Rhode-Island, Aug. 29, 1778;—aye, that and the Three Cods Tavern, which has embedded in it a cannon-ball fired in 1775 from His Majesty's frigate *Lively* that lay in M'head harbour. It was a delirium of Colonial antiquity, and when the dusk crept out of the sea and the tender silver thread of a young moon quiver'd shyly over the century'd chimneys of Barnegat, I look'd at the little windows as they lighted up one by one. Inside were old panell'd walls and mantels with curious antient clocks and candlesticks—and was it in a dream that I saw an old man with buckled shoes and tie-wig? And St. Michael's churchyard, where at twilight hideous shadows lurk amonst the dense willows of the far cor-

ner, and caper a ghoulish *danse macabre* on the tops of the old slate slabs as soon as the moon goes down! And the lone *well* of the vanish'd Fountain Inn on the bleak hill leading to Barnegat—the well where the waters whisper of old things—and the terrible "Old Brig" built in 1650 across the road, where Old Diamond the witch-man liv'd, and where his hideous granddaughter, the witch Moll Pitcher, was born. The past . . . the past. . . .

. . . . . After the magick of the past, I know not how I ever broke away; but I did so at half past nine. Going to Lynn on the tramway, I took the Boston coach, and safely caught the Providence coach leaving the Hub at 11:45. By 2 a. m. I was at this desk again, plaguy exhausted, but well satisfy'd with the antique impressions I had gather'd. I had sojourned for a time in *the past* itself—not the past of books, but its living, breathing streets.

Since then I have dreamt of nothing but Marblehead . . . old streets and gables and chimney-pots, and the endless maze of fanlighted Colonial doorways. And I dream of a small black kitten that I paus'd to stroke—a small black kitten with white on his nose and forefeet. He was very playful indeed. . . .

Yr. obt. Grandpa

136. TO JAMES F. MORTON

June 24, 1923

Augustissime:—

Say—I wish that stamp request had come a day earlier! I threw away a twelve-center just too soon——but that's life! That old collection of mine hasn't been mine since 1916, when I gave it to my cousin Phillips Gamwell. He died on the last day of that same year—from other causes—and the collection is now stored among his mother's things in some obscure place—either in Providence or Cambridge. She treasures his effects so much, that I'm damned if I know whether it would be in good taste to ask for the things back again——one must be aesthetic, even if cynical and unsentimental——so I couldn't possibly predict the future of these varicolour'd scraps of paper. But if I do get hold of 'em—look for a windfall! My cousin was a great kid—a Belknap and Alfredus rolled into one. They remind me of him—he was my best and

earliest grandson! I can still see myself training him when he was three and I was eleven! . . .

Deafness? Gawd, how I miss it! Hearing is so common. But I don't see many people nowadays, so it doesn't matter much——nothing does, for that matter. I shall always remember——as a precious, sacred memory——that I have been deaf——

Tibaldvs

137. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Our Customary Habitation—
10 July, 1923

Reverend Sir:—

. . . . . You *must* see Marblehead for yourself! The section which was new to me last month was really the best of all—between the hideous Victoria bulk of Abbott Hall and the harbour. It comprised the principal hill, with its incredible network of streets without sidewalks, and its ancient houses set at all possible angles on moss-grown rock foundations and weird terraces. Marblehead is a garland of unending delights—one could live there rapturously for ever, discovering new wonders each day . . . little corners where graceful vines creep, curious bits of sunken garden where vivid flowers bloom and where exotic stone images lurk amidst the grass, marvellous doorways carved two hundred years ago by beauty-loving sailors and having rough stone steps flanked by conch-shells brought from the far Hesperides . . . the past . . . the past. . . . Verily, here alone survives the maritime New-England of yesterday, with the glamour of ships and the salt winds of eighteenth-century voyages. On this occasion I stayed in Marblehead till nine-thirty p. m., when candles shone thro' small-pan'd windows, revealing old-world panelled interiors and ancient fireplaces and mantels. Then I went directly home, reaching 598 at two a. m., after a trip I hardly remember . . . a trip I hardly remember, so full was it of antique dreams and pictures of narrow lanes and gables and chimneys in old and glamorous seaports.

Yr. expectant and obt. Servt.
LO.

138. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old 598
July 24, 1923

Hello, Sonny:—

. . . . . I am well-nigh resolv'd to write no more tales, but merely to dream when I have a mind to, not stopping to do any thing so vulgar as to set down the dream for a boarish Publick. I have concluded, that Literature is no proper pursuit for a gentleman; and that Writing ought never to be consider'd but as an elegant Accomplishment, to be indulg'd in with Infrequency, and Discrimination. I am now wholly a Spectator to Life, a mere Dilettante, whose Pleasure it is to contemplate the Past and enjoy the agreeable Mildness of Georgian pastoral Retirement.

I do not agree with you regarding the Merit of the Female Mind. In my opinion, 'tis not only not more imaginative than that of Men, but vastly less so; so that I can scarce think of any really Powerful phantastical Vision, which is not of Masculine Origin. Females are in Truth much given to affected Baby Lisping, but there is nothing of truly childlike Oneiroscopy in it. They are by Nature literal, prosaic, and commonplace, given to dull realistick Details and practical Things, and incapable alike of vigorous artistick Creation and genuine, first-hand appreciation. 'Tis foolish to draw generalities from the few Exceptions which by Reason of the singularity attract Notice, or from the State of the Publick in America, where a vilely democratical Society chains down the Men to commercial Pursuits, leaving the mediocre Female Train to achieve literary Distinction merely by Default, or for Want of Competition. When, in the near Course of the Revolutions of Society, American females shall themselves be given over to Business, and depriv'd of their present deceptive advantage, you will perceive how inferior the mass of them are, in aesthetick Matters, to the Male part of Humanity.

. . . . . I was at the assemblage of the Hub Club in Boston some three Weeks gone. I went down July 3d in an Evening Coach, that started from Mr. Olney's tavern, over against the new brick School House in Gaol-Lane, and arriv'd at the new British Coffee-House, in

Boston, about seven o'clock. Having got to the Seat of the Assemblage, Mr. Parker's House, in Malden, by another Coach, I found a numerous Crowd of Persons kept in by the bad Weather, and resolv'd to be entertain'd at any Cost. . . .

The diversions of the evening were afforded by a Singer, an unconsciously comick and deeply sentimental Rhymer, and a Fellow who profest to read Character from the Contour of the Face and Bigness of the Chest and Belly. This latter Fellow was the most admir'd of all, because of his Skill in Flattery, whereby he made Persons of the most oppos'd Features appear equally Superior. In Truth, so considerable was the Force of his Rhetorick, that a Quality which in one Case was reckon'd a Defect by Reason of its Absence; was in another Case extoll'd as a Virtue by Reason of its Presence. When this worthie Man had completed his Examination of me, and pronounc'd his Panegyrick, I felt not a little chagrin'd; that, being endow'd by Nature with such prodigious Abilities and Intellectuals, I had made so poor an Employment of them. The concluding event of the evening was a Vendue of trifling articles, conducted by N. Morton, Esq., Brother to our Companion James Ferdinand. So persuasive was the Language of the Auctioneer, that I was stript of five shillings with but little in return; whilst others far'd no better. That Night (as well as the other Nights of my stay) I stopt at Mr. Parker's Dwelling.

On the following Day the Delegates din'd at a Coffee-House in Belknap Street, at the Sign of the Brick Oven; a place which I lik'd monstrous well because of its perfect Similitude to Will's, in Rupell Street, Covent-Garden, where Mr. Addison and I have so many Times smoak'd a Pipe together. This edifice was erected prior to 1750 in a Street whose other Houses are of like Date; and it hath had scarce any Change either inside or outside. The finely wrought Door-Way, the small-pan'd Windows, the panell'd Walls, the carv'd Mantel, the brick Fireplace, and the round wooden Tables and old Chairs, are all of mine own Aera; and bring very agreeably to Mind the favourite Scenes of my Life. After this the Delegates departed for the Ship *Michael J. Perkins*, which took them on a Trip of Observation around Boston Harbour. Having made the trip two years ago, I found it dull, as was also the Discourse of the gentleman from whose Company I cou'd not disengage my self; a stout dogmatical Publisher nam'd Christopher. Upon landing, in the Evening, the Assemblage betook itself to the

United Colonies Tavern, near the Wharves, where the Hours until Dusk were spent in aimless and amiable Conversation. It was particularly entertaining to watch the awkward Attempts of Michael White, Esq., to shine as a Critick and Man of Taste. I not infrequently chaleng'd his Contentions, tho' I forbore to make publick Sport of him before a Company in which he so frequently appears. It now being fairly dark, the gathering march'd to Boston Common, where the estimable Lynch (thro' Friendship with the Lord Mayor) had secur'd us all a front Bench at the Celebration and Fireworks held in Honour of the Colony's Rebellion. I sate next good Mr. Christopher, with Mr. Parker's small Boy upon my Knee, and waited patiently for the Termination of the small Vauxhall that was enacted on the Greensward and on the Frog Pond. There was a Band of Musicians with Horns and Hautboys, a Troop of dancing Children drest up for all the World like the Maypole Brats at Bartholomew-Fair, some little illuminated Barques on the Lake, and some attempted Singing by all the assembled Townsfolk, in a Fashion so raucous that it wou'd have been imputed a Breach of the publick Peace but for the amiability that glow'd on every honest Face. When they sang *God Save the King* to the new rebel Words, every body stood up save Nelson Morton, whose own Grandfather writ those Words; he remaining seated because of a Prejudice against meaningless and formal Posturings. The Manner of singing was such, that I fear the Mortons' grandfather found his coffin too tight; and it was with no little Amusement, that I glanc'd up at the classick Steeple of the Park Street Church, (put up in 1810 by Saml McIntire of Salem) where the Words were first sung a generation ago. As for me, I sang those Words proper to a loyal Subject of His Majesty, and made a special effort to be heard, when I came to the Lines saying "confound their Politicks, frustrate their knavish Tricks". And when the Singing turn'd upon Mr. Key's mediocre *Star-Splangled Banner*, I very naturally sang the correct Words, *To Anacreon in Heav'n*, which I so frequently inton'd 150 years ago in London, when a Member of the Anacreontick Society. Altogether, the event was singularly Arcadian, and peerless in its innocuous Insipidity. Closely following these harmless Revels, the pyrotechnical Display imparted a saving Vivacity to the Scene; and I may truly declare, that I enjoy'd the Spectacle exceedingly, comparing the vivid Illuminations and frightful Explosions to those vast Catastrophes, which must often afflict the several Orbs of outer

Space, and which may some Day convulse our own Solar System. This climacticall show concluded the gathering in appropriate Fashion, and most of the Participants affirm'd themselves well satisfy'd by the two days' Variety of Diversions.

. . . . . A more melancholy Event of this Day was the Loss of that faithful Quill which I have us'd since 1906, a Loss occasion'd by my following, for the first Time this Season, the Cleveland and New-York Custom of leaving off my Gold Brocade Waistcoat. Having plac'd the Pen in the inside Pocket of my Coat, I at some Time jostled it out unknowingly; so that I shall never behold it more. This Epistle is writ with a self-filling Conklin given me in a Burst of fraternal Commiseration by my old Friend Maurice Winter Moe, Gent.

* * * * *

I next went out of Doors on the following Sunday, when the Advent to Providence of Mrs. Greene interrupted my customary Lethargy. On this occasion, I took both the Visitor and my elder Daughter Mrs. Clark, over about half the Route I had travers'd on the Tuesday before, and they agreed in professing themselves well-pleas'd with the Scenes which they behld. The next Day I shew'd Mrs. Greene several antient parts of Providence; both on the Hill, where the main Settlement before 1750 existed, and on the West Side, where Houses were built after 1750, upon the filling in of the Salt Marshes then covering the Business District. I am becoming increasingly absorb'd in the Antiquities of Providence, and design at some Time to prepare a descriptive Essay, shewing the Town as it was at various Periods betwixt its Founding in 1636 and the Debasement of Architecture 200 years later. Much of the Material I have already collected in the Form of Notes, of which a monstrous Number at present litter my Desk. On Tuesday I rose at the incredible Hour of *five*, to accompany Mrs. Greene on an early Coach to the neighbouring Watering-Place of Narragansett-Pier, where she had Business, and which on Account of its Fame I was not averse to seeing; tho' I had formerly been thro' it only in great Haste, on a Coach Journey, fifteen years ago. The Trip to this modern Rival of Bath and Tunbridge-Wells lay thro' much of the Country I had cover'd a week previously; and I observ'd with Pleasure the steeples of Apponang, and the House-dotted Hillside of East-Greenwich. At Kingston, a sleepy Town, we chang'd to another Coach, which con-

vey'd us thro' a Region of very fair Landskips. Having arriv'd at Narragansett-Pier, we were confronted by an agreeable Expanse of Shoar, lin'd with a passable Esplanade, and adorn'd with an opulent Variety of Shops and Country-Seats. So far as I cou'd ascertain, there are no striking Antiquities or Beauties of Scenery; so that I was not griev'd to quit it on a noon Coach. When this Vehicle reacht Kingston, we chang'd to the Boston Stage. Mrs. Greene went directly to Boston, but at Providence I bade her adieu; quitting the Stage in Time to joyn my Daughter Mrs. Clark at the Play-House, where we beheld a tolerable enactment of M. Archer's stageplay, intitul'd *The Green Goddess*. After this I visited some shops, purchas'd a Hat and some Shoes that I grievously needed, and finally return'd to 598 to sink back into on Hibernation of Colonial Dream and Roman Reflection, whose Duration only the circumambient Fates might determine.

Be Grandpa's nice Boy!
HP

139. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
July 30, 1923

My dear Smith:—

. . . . . I shall be 33 next month, & am already falling into the role of the comfortable, benevolent old gentleman! Tranquillity, though, was always my goal. I have always had a deep & persistent notion that life doesn't amount to very much, & that it would have been better if one had never been born. I have doubted whether anything in existence be worth the sacrifice of simple placidity & freedom from strong emotion, & have thus vegetated along very quietly, more of an epicurean in the strict historical sense than a hedonist of the Cyrenaic kind—which most moderns seem to be. And I still think my phlegmatic way & detached, cosmic attitude have gained me more than they have lost me. Doubtless my position is highly inartistic—but I don't let that worry me. I can summon up enough ghouls & lemures to amuse my idle hours—& it's all the better if they don't harrow me up

as they used to do in my nervous nightmares—which were most marked when I was six years old. But I digress.

I am glad you find something of interest in *The Other Gods*. Yes—it represents me in my most Dunsanian mood. Truly, Dunsany has influenced me more than anyone else except Poe—his rich language, his cosmic point of view, his remote dream-world, & his exquisite sense of the fantastic, all appeal to me more than anything else in modern literature. My first encounter with him—in the autumn of 1919—gave an immense impetus to my writing; perhaps the greatest it has ever had. . . .

—H P L

140. TO JAMES F. MORTON

6 August, 1923

O More Than Mightiest:—

. . . . . A gentleman shouldn't write all his images down for a plebeian rabble to stare at. If he writes at all, it shou'd be in private letters to other gentleman of sensitiveness and discrimination.

Thine obt. Servt.
θεοβάλδος
Theobaldus

141. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Old 598
Aug. 19, 1923

Mocrates, My Son:—

Tuesday I made the Portsmouth trip according to schedule, and what a survival of the past I found! I'll be shot if it doesn't knock Salem off the map, and dangerously challenge Marblehead for the champeenship! Fancy a living town of some 13,569 inhabitants—almost purely old Yankee stock—with a dominant industry over a century old, and an

array of buildings practically the same as in the decade 1800-1810! It is a dream—a vision—the experience of a lifetime! Man, man! Why didn't someone shoot me while I was happy—there amidst the atmosphere of Georgian days! I can't describe the trip except lyrically—but I enclose a folder (for you to keep) showing the route I fully and faithfully follow'd. What a town! Vistas of endless ancient roofs, steeples, and chimneys, with not a modern feature in sight! Labyrinths of quiet streets and lanes lined with *Colonial doorways* and innocent of sidewalk or paving—streets redolent of an elder world, and communicating their old-Yankee air even to their inhabitants. How can I put across the magick of those streets . . . I grope for words and phrases . . . white houses with green blinds and small-paned windows; sprawling flagstones and jagged doorsteps; glimpses of old gardens with tall hollyhocks; glints of the sea down long narrow lanes where grasses grow around the iron-railed steps that lead to high colonial doorways . . . it's the whale's pocket-flask, kid! And I went across on the ferry (to be abandoned this week when the $2,000,000 bridge is opened) into Kittery, Maine, (my first contact with Maine soil—I bought some ice-cream for twelve cents at a village shop, to say I had eaten in Maine) obtaining on the way some glimpses of the ancient Portsmouth waterfront which recalled with eery fidelity the great old days of the Colonial seatrade. Where can one find another such waterfront? I show'd you the old Providence warehouses (1816) and adjacent things, but that is cheaply modern compared with the harbour of Portsmouth, where warehouses of 1750-1800 rub elbows with still older gambrel-roofed dwellings, and crown a moss-grown bank wall rising partly from the water and partly from still grassy banks. O happy town! O felicitous freedom from smoky factories! No need for me to use my imagination in describing a prosperous eighteenth century seaport—I have seen one! . . .

I am, Sir for cosmick aeternity,
Yr. most oblig'd most obt. Servt.
LO.

142. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Usual Sepulchre
4th September 1923

Mocrates, my Son:—

And did I tell you all about the Moffat-Ladd house in Market St.? 1763—with a mantel carved by Grinling Gibbons himself. I found there the finest woodwork interior I ever beheld, save possibly in the Lee Mansion. It was a dream—a visual orgie. There are pictorial panels beyond descriptions, and carvings that transport the fancy. And the grand staircase! It is an ecstasy . . . a sonnet! The arched window on the landing is one of the most beautiful things ever glimpsed by human eyes, though perhaps not superior to similar colossal windows in the Lee Mansion and the Gardener-Wentworth house.

But the garden behind the house! May the mantle of Aristaenetus descend upon me, that I may draw in moving numbers a terraced paradise more lovely than ever the graden of Phyllion was. Mehercule! Not L. Licinius Lucullus himself could dream such a garden! It is of the *eighteenth century*, and of that alone! It is a lyric of sensuous colour and plastic form, moulded and tinted with a thousand subtleties of grace and feeling, and vivid with an atmosphere in which line, hue, odour, and sound are blent to a potent and opiate climax that expands the soul and annihilates time and reality. It is deep—a whole large city block in depth—and in width it takes nearly a block as well. Here one may stray in perfumed dream for long summer hours, loitering in the shade of vast arbours, ascending and descending gentle steps of verdant turf, watching the aërial minstrels as they carol and chatter around the bird-fountain on an obscurely hedged inner lawn with settees and flower-beds, or marking the sun's progress on the antique dial amidst the central riot of passionate blooms—rose and white, violet and blue, purple and pink, gold and green—and of dionysiac scents and symbols—lilac and lily, lavendar and valerian, polychrome and swelling fruit, scarlet berries, and in the distance the diamond music of an hyaline fount in whose pool an universe of gay petals drifts and drinks. To sit here through eternities of visioning, here on an ancient circular

bench beneath a gnarled and venerable apple-tree under a sinking August sun, when all the world of faery—that lovely elder world which stays only in the most delicate dreams—is turning from white to gold, from gold to vermeil, and from deepening ruddiness to the cool purple and ineffable shadow of star-gemmed night . . . Hei! but that were happiness in truth . . . an happiness in which the ecstasy of the mere senses is lifted into the highest exaltations of the spirit, and by infinite wonder and the mystery of dim worlds and centuries made one with the rapture of Pegāna's gods. When it is twilight in the worlds, there are heard in that garden the invisible steps of MĀNA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who is weary of Sardathrion's gleaming walls and onyx lions, and would gaze softly and gently on that loveliness he hath created in his dreams. It was very beautiful in that garden.

And in the dying light I made another and final circuit of that cryptical, that prehistoric town; beholding the ancient mansions as sunset gilded their gables and reddened their roofs, lit witch-fires in their age-old windows, and drew their grotesque chimneys in black, fantastic outlines against the west. And besides the mansions I looked at the little lowly streets with flagstones and cottage doorways, peopled now with those Georgian shades that loom out of the dusk when it is quivering, violet, and ambiguous. When I was at the hoary Point of Graves on the harbour-front, watching the shadows dance sarabands amongst the low slate slabs, I saw a tenuous thread of lucent selmite tremble above the far-off Christian Shore, and melt even as I glimpsed it, into the deep, shimmering western mists that still echoed with light. Evening had come, and through silent, unillumined Colonial streets I made my way to the station, glancing now and then at the arabesques of the tenebrous steeples and Gothic vanes and singular chimney-pots as they stood limned before the inscrutable and immemorial stars; the pale, languorous stars that saw Portsmouth born, and that without a smile will see Portsmouth die. . . .

I beg leave to subscribe myself, Sir,
Yr. most hble., most obt. Servt.
LO.

143. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old 598
Septr. 4, 1923

Hello, Sonny!

Maurice Winter Moe, Esq., arriv'd in Providence by boat on the early morning of August 10, 1923. Going to the Tavern of the Y. M. C. A., he sent me a message which brought me to meet him at ten a. m. Imagine the dramatick pleasure of that occasion—the first personal meeting, of those who had for nine long years fought by mail in the most amiable and diverting fashion conceivable! Our recognition was mutually instantaneous, and despite our different theological views we found each other extremely agreeable. Small Alfredus is a naughty boy to be rude to Ol' Mocrates, for the Milwaukee sage possesses that warmth of heart and natural good feeling which form, in a cosmos devoid of absolute values or fixt purpose, the highest and most considerable things we may justly reckon as values. I am ever partial to the man of kindness and virtue, and such I found honest Mocrates to be. Wou'd that my Alfredus-child were less deterr'd by those little narrownesses which are, after all, but trivial excrescences upon a character both noble and amiable in its essence. . . .

Going to Boston on the six o'clock coach, we were met at the South Tavern by Bimbo Sandusky, Edw: Cole, Gent., and his wife, Mrs. Moe, her sister, and those two sprightly and incomparable little Belnapii, Robert and Donald Moe, posterity of Mocrates the Great. This party were on a trip in the coach of Murray Northrup, Gent., of Poughkeepsie, in New-York, by whom Mrs. Moe's sister is employ'd as a secretary, and I was indeed glad to behold the two tiny prodigies whose austere parent hath told me so much of them. Robert (age 11) is a little Gallipinius, extremely witty and voluble; whilst Donald (age 9) is a miniature Belknap, given to quietness of tongue and openness of ear. I am lately informd that, all these weeks later, young Donald's first remark on being introduc'd to Niagara Falls, was the exclamation: "Gee, what wou'd Mr. Lovecraft say!"—a thing which may be taken as an evidence, that the youth is not unimprest with volubility and flow, whether in aqueous torrents or in childish old gentlemen. By a process of incredi-

ble compression, all nine persons of the augmented party climb'd into the Northrup coach to be driven to the Myers home in Cambridge, where Moe, the Coles, Sandusky, and I were to dine. I held young Robert upon my lap, and was vastly diverted with the lively play of his humour. Safety reaching our goal in Clinton Street, we bade adieu to the Mocratick relatives, who were staying at J. Copley's Plaza Tavern, (where I heard my Ld. Dunsany speak four years ago) and enter'd the house; where besides the family we found Mrs. Miniter already arriv'd. The feast pass'd without any notable incident, and about eleven we repair'd to the Parker-Miniter estate, in Malden, for the night. I gave Moe the only available spare room, because of his extreme fatigue; myself sleeping upon a sort of gambrel-roof'd couch in the parlour, which in its day hath had the honour of sustaining the august bulk of no less a worthy than our side-partner James Ferdinand Morton, Jun.

. . . . . Going now on foot to the South Tavern, I reluctantly put Mocrates on the New-York coach, and bade him look long at Providence and her antique steeples when he pass'd through. I hated monstrously to see him go, for he is a person of the most companionable amiability, even if he does write down all his expenditures in a little green note book for his wife to see. After bidding the good sage farewell, I return'd to Malden to spend the night before my solitary trip to the antient city of Portsmouth, capital (before the treason of 1775-83) of His Majesty's Province of New-Hampshire. This time I had the spare room—and a coal-black cat came in and slept across my feet . . . nice ol' Snowball, he knows his Grandpa likes kitties! It had been a great four days, and I was darned glad to have seen Ol' Mocrates. He declared it the best four days he had ever spent in his life!

. . . . . Tho' the journey consum'd all of two hours, I arriv'd at Portsmouth at noon, by reason of the different time kept in the New-Hampshire province. And to what a realm of antient charm and wonder had I come! 'Zounds, child! But in spite of old Marblehead I now felt merg'd for the first time in *the living whirl of the real eighteenth century*. For Portsmouth in the one city which hath kept its own life and people as well as its houses and streets. There are scarce any inhabitants but the old families, and scarce any industries but the old shipbuilding and the navy yard which hath been there since 1800. The place is the metropolis of its region, and has a population of 13,569, (census 1920) all of the earliest New-Hampshire stock. As I left the

coach I found myself in a slum district of antient Colonial houses. Nothing post-Revolutionary was in sight, save the coach-tavern and its accessories, and across the road was an archaick graveyard with slate slabs. Wandering up an hilly street lin'd with colonial doorways, I finally reach'd the Market Parade, where on every hand rose the brick, stone and wood facades of Georgian shops, churches, and publick buildings. It was as antediluvian as the business centre of Newburyport. Yet with the astounding difference that it was teeming with sprightly crowds (with pure ENGLISH faces) and brisk vehicles. The city was alive—yet just as it was when His Majesty's Governor, the Honourable Benning Wentworth, Esquire (from whom both Mrs. Miniter and W. Paul Cook are lineally descended), sate in the Colony House or doz'd of an evening before the fire at his mansion near Little Harbour, of which the late Prof. Longfellow writ, in his poem intitul'd *Lady Wentworth* . . . .

I now walkt on to the new bridge, (which was not to be open'd till five days later, during the tercentenary pageant) thence proceeding thro' a maze of hilly, almost prehistorick streets with brick ship-chandlers' shops, swinging signs, and huge cobblestones, to the doom'd ferry to Kittery, MAINE, which the bridge wou'd in less than a week banish for ever. Embarking and sailing past Badger Island toward the state wherein, despite the contemporary presence of my small Roman Consul grandchild, I had never before set foot, I gaz'd back at the Portsmouth waterfront and skyline, and gasp'd in wonder and admiration. Here, indeed, the Colonial age still liv'd untainted; for beneath a silhouette of antient roofs and spires stretch'd a line of venerable wharves utterly immune from change of progress—wharves, and mostly bits of sea-wall surmounted by gambrel-roof'd Georgian warehouses and resting on rocks or fragments of still grassy bank. To such waterfronts, a century and a half ago, came the great India barques of the Providence merchants, the Salem adventurers, and the Boston magnates—but in Portsmouth alone the delectable sight survives. . . .

I now re-crost into the main section, turning toward the waterfront and entering Market Street, formerly call'd Paved Street, because it had the only pavement in the town. Here on a terrace stands the lordly Moffat-Whipple-Ladd house, built in 1763 and the oldest square mansion in New-Hampshire. Entering, I found the finest woodwork interior I ever beheld, save possibly in the Lee Mansion at Marblehead. It was

a dream—a visible orgie—and I purchas'd a costly sett of pictures covering every detail. There are pictorial panels above description, and carvings (one by Grinling Gibbons himself) intoxicating to the fancy. And the staircase! It is an ecstasy . . . a sonnet! The arch'd window on the landing is one of the most beautiful things ever glimps'd by human eyes, tho' perhaps not superior to similar colossal windows in the Lee Mansion and the Gardner-Wentworth house.

* * * * *

Heigho, but the world is a weary place! I have been reading over old fantastick things—and your Machen books, which I deem among the few great achievements of the living generation—and some of the new Haldeman-Julius booklets I lately added . . . De Gourmont's *Night in the Luxembourg*, Schopenhauer's *Art of Controversy*, your friend John Cowper Powys' *Hundred Best Books*, and such—aimless reading, because all life is aimless—listless reading, because I am a listless, weary old Gentleman who doth not enjoy reading nearly as much as looking at old houses, dreaming in old gardens, and drowsing before old hearth-fires. And I have writ two hideous tales—*The Unnamable* and *The Rats in the Walls*, the latter being the longest story ever to proceed from my pen. I shall never shew them to anybody because I will not type them and do not wish to hear the adverse criticism I am sure little Alfie will give them. The amusement of such things is purely in the writing, and I have many more in mind for the near future, including the plots we discust last fall.

Yr. obt.
Grandpa

144. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Septr. 21, 1923

Hello, Sonny!

Wednesday occurred the grand pedestrian attempt—the assult on Durfee Hill—which failed only because of the time shortage, occasioned by Mortonius' booking on the 7:00 N. Y. Boat. We took a lunch, and boarded the 10:55 a. m. car for Chepachet, the nearest Providence-

connected village to our objective; speeding through some of the quaintest countryside conceivable. Chepachet itself, which we reached in a little over an hour, is a veritable bucolic poem—a study in ancient New-England village atmosphere, with its deep, grass-bordered gorge, its venerable bridge, and its picturesque, centuried houses. I would have liked to see more of it, but time was precious. Instead, we tramped westward along the Putnam Pike, through a region as wild and desolate as anything in rural Maine; noting here and there some sinister farmhouse or some appealing panorama of low, distant hills. Guided by Mortonius' map, we turned south along a by-road some three miles from Chepachet, striking a hilly, wooded section, and finally coming to a junction for which the chart had not prepared us. Here Mortonius chose a central path which my geographical instinct led me to demur at—and sure enough, it landed us in a brambly forest beside a pond, far from all access to Durfee Hill, and too late to permit of a second hillward effort! Baffled, we ate our lunch upon the shore and retraced our weary steps. In an effort after variety, we decided to go not to Chepachet, but to the larger village of Pascoag, two miles farther off, which would let us make suitable rail connexions for the N. Y. boat. This decision we did not regret, for the road proved to be a narrow, hilly affair typical of pre-automobile New-England, and leading past fragmentary vineyards and beautiful bits of lake and hill. Finally we saw the slender spires of Pascoag in the distance—the spires of ancient Pascoag all golden in the late afternoon, and rising like the minarets of a faery village. Pascoag lies by the side of a lake in a lovely valley, and we walked down to it past many a Colonial farmhouse and village cot. The scene is magical—it is the early, half-forgotten, beautiful simple America that Poe and Hawthorne knew—a village with narrow winding streets and Colonial facades, and a sleepy square where merchants sit in their doorways. We procured some ice-cream at a tavern, and took the four-forty-five train for Providence. This return route led through some idyllic regions, with frequent pleasing vistas of winding river, verdant plain, and steepled hamlet; so that we truly regretted our arrival at the smoky suburbs that presaged Providence. Disembarking, we took a car for the wharves, winding through a colourful waterfront section whose colonial skyline and dingy facades bespeak the fallen grandeur of the vanisht India trade. At last the ship was reached, and I accompany'd Mortonius aboard till sailing time. The harbour view was stimulating

to the fancy, and I would fain have stay'd longer; but the bell soon clang'd, and brought to an end a visit in every respect pleasurable and engrossing.

Returning home, I retired at ten-thirty *and slept twenty-one hours continuously*. The activity of the week had fatigu'd me more than I was conscious of, tho' I anticipate no permanent ill effects. On Wednesday alone we must have walkt full ten miles in a blazing sun. What does disturb my placidity, is the monstrous cold which hath for two days been plaguing my nose and throat. 'Tis truly a most damnable nuisance, and must be held partly accountable for any unusual dulness in this the second part of my epistle.

Well—be a nice boy and don't overdo!

—Grandpa.

145. TO JAMES F. MORTON

South of Pascoag
23d Septr., 1923

Illustrissime!

. . . You thought all that pedestrianism had killed me off, yet here I am alive and everything, and with my usual smile of cynical placidity on my coarse features! After getting home Wednesday I slept 21 hours without a break, and after six hours of subsequent consciousness I slept 11 more; then came more consciousness and a sleep of 13 hours, after which was more consciousness, which still persists into Sunday morning. Am I rested? Well, I would be if it weren't for this damned *cold*, which keeps me wheezing like a one-lunged Ford. But that is getting better at last, so I may well sing of sunshine and happiness and all that damned rot.

Mrs. Gamwell—who came over and ate up one of our left-over eggs—expressed regret at not seeing you, whilst Mrs. Clark—who tried to eat up the other but saw a green spot in it which she didn't like—expressed pleasure that she had better fortune in that respect. Heigho! The favours of fate are bestow'd with blandly ironick injustice!

There's a Harding stamp on the outside of this envelope, but none have come in lately. However, I've asked my more obliging correspondents to turn in those they get on any envelopes, so unless they're forgetful I'll have at least a few for you. I like these stamps—such a relief from that vulgar red, and those eternal drowsy features of poor Genl. Washington. Harding was a handsome bimbo—I'm sure sorry he had the good luck to get clear of this beastly planet.

Sept. 23-24.

Oho! Another sleep—this one twelve hours long! Consciousness and I sure do hate each other! But I guess I've slept off the worst of my cold.

Theobaldus Ambulaus,
grand Titan, K.K.K.

146. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Old 598
7 October '23

H'lo, Sonny!

Sophistication, Sonny, isn't as smart a thing as its victims believe. Intellectually it may be very nice, for it involves the discovery of all sorts of things about the universe and men's responses to it; but aesthetically it is as sure death as potassic cyanide, because it jambles the mind up with so many jarring facts and moods and realisations of universal chaos that it doesn't leave any freshness or wonder or material to make artistic patterns with. A sophisticated mind may be very philosophical, but it can never be artistic. That is why literature today is practically dead—perhaps inevitably so. It's all right, Sonny, to write this modern gibberish with your tongue in your cheek—as I do Bush work—just for the money. But pray don't fancy it's art—except occasionally by accident. Feed the *Dial, Brown, Rhythms,* and all the rest with as much jazz as they'll pay you for—but forget about that stuff when you sit down seriously to create beauty or crystallise the beauty that floats delicately through your dreams.

. . . . . Well, Sonny, if you like to see the Old Gentleman in print, just you go out to the general store and buy the October *Weird Tales,* which has not only *Dagon* (with one picture) but a whole page about your Grandpa in *The Eyrie,* including some very indiscreet extracts from letters with unflattering allusions to Messrs. Vincent Starrett and

George Sterling. Grandpa'll have to be careful what he writes this Baird person, for the latter seems to have the repeating habit to a very alarming degree. If Starrett and Sterling don't start out after their Grandpa Theobald with stilettos and automatics, it'll be merely because they don't believe in bothering to swat small skeeters. . . .

I read my new tales aloud to the new Providence amateur Eddy, and when I finished *The Unnamable* he and his wife sat still for about two minutes without making a comment—they said it horrified their breath away. . . . They like *The Hound* best of all my tales. Eddy has typed that for me in exchange for my revising a horror-story, *The Ghost-Eater* —for him.

As to these limited editions and so forth—I don't care for 'em at all. All I want of a book is to have it in good clear type for my old eyes, clean, and free from misprints. What edition it is, or who owned it in the past, isn't any concern of mine; although I do like it to be in the "long *S*" if possible. I don't like the literary world and literary people. They are little effeminate coxcombs, sir, with all manner of affectations and bad manners. I like a wholesome country-gentleman that is a gentleman, with the out-of-doors taste and love of our English countryside and antiquities that befit a red-blooded, true-born Briton conscious of his warlike and virtuous heritage. God Save the King! Now see what kind of a man you must grow up to be, Sonny! I had rather hunt foxes and study old cathedrals than read books, and when I do read it is only to bring old things back to me. . . .

. . . . . One of my grandchildren has just come to New-York to attend Barnard College—the prodigy Dorothy Roberts of Ohio—and I believe you would really enjoy talking Cabell and Machen and Anatole France with her. She is wholly outside the Bacon class, and has in these last months come up to a truly remarkable intellectual and scholastic standard—rating just below the Alfredus-Belknap level and perhaps above even Edgar Davis. This child is a cynic and pessimist; disillusioned, ecstatically fond of your beloved Gallia, and given to the decadents in prose and verse. She writes excellent poetry, but with a curious reticence forbids me to show either that or her epistles, else I should long ago have inducted her into the Alfredus-Belknap clique. All I can show, without violating the ethicks of an English gentleman of the old school, is a list of her recent reading—if I can find it—but from that you can judge how brilliant an infant she is despite her unfortunate failure to belong to the superior gender. . . .

Speaking of Cook, he hath just lent me two books, one of which is Bram Stoker's last production, *The Lair of the White Worm*. The plot idea is colossal, but the development is so childish that I cannot imagine how the thing ever got into print—unless on the reputation of *Dracula*. The rambling and unmotivated narration, the puerile and stagey characterisation, the irrational propensity of everyone to do the most stupid possible thing at precisely the wrong moment and for no cause at all, and the involved development of a personality afterward relegated to utter insignificance—all this proves to me either that *Dracula* (Mrs. Miniter saw *Dracula* in manuscript about thirty years ago. It was incredibly slovenly. She considered the job of revision, but charged too much for Stoker.) and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* were touched up Bushwork-fashion by a superior hand which arranged *all* the details, or that by the end of his life (he died in 1912, the year after the *Lair* was issued) he trickled out in a pitiful and inept senility. But the book is a painful thing! The other volume Cook lent is a very different—oh, how different!—proposition, since it contains what both Cook and I solemnly declare to be a peerless masterpiece—the finest horror-story of the generation, and by a living and almost wholly unknown author. The book is a collection of weird tales by M. P. Shiel, and is called—after the opening story—*The Pale Ape*. Some of the things are mediocre, though all are smooth. One is diabolically clever, though hardly weird. Three or four are superfine—*Huguenin's Wife, The Bride, The Great King,* and *The House of Sounds*. Yes—this last is the masterpiece! How can I describe its poison-grey "insidious madness"? If I say that it is very like *The Fall of the House of Usher*, or that one feature mirrors my own *Alchemist*, (1908) I shall not even have suggested the utterly unique delirium of arctic wastes, titan seas, insane brazen towers, centuried malignity, frenzied waves and cataracts, and above all hideous, insistent, brain-petrifying, Pan-accursed cosmic SOUND . . . God! but after that story I shall never try to write another of my own. Shiel has done so much better than my best, that I am left breathless and inarticulate. And yet the man is virtually unknown in America—and almost so in his native Britain.

You must be sensible I am no Puritan. I believe in nothing, and relish old-time English placidity merely because I deem it more beatiful than all the swinish chaos and silly freaks of the moderns. I don't hate sensuous beauty or the decadents—they are very pretty ornaments—but simply fail to see why people should get *excited* over such things any

more than I do over any quiet landscapes. In a purposeless cosmos all are equal and none worth a serious thought. One may only pick what one likes, and smile—realising that where there are no real patterns, one is as good as another. And it is best not to make oneself absurd by getting excited, violent, freakish, and anti-social about illusory trifles. Nothing matters, but it's perhaps more comfortable to keep calm and not interfere with other people.

Yr. obt. ancestor
Theobaldus

147. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
Octr. 17, 1923

My dear Smith:—

. . . . . Galpin is a case. With the most brilliant, accurate, steel-cold intellect I have ever encountered, he is yet distinctly erratic & temperamental. Just now he has forgotten the fantastic & everything else except music & intensive scholarship. At the Univ. of Chicago he has proved a marvel, & after two weeks was raised from a *scholarship* to a full *fellowship*. You'll probably hear from the kid again when he recovers from the intoxication of accumulating honours. . . .

Yr most obt
H P L

148. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Same Ol' Joint
28 October, 1923

Reverend and Philatelic Sir:—

. . . . . Scarce less is my envy at perusing your account of the new quincuncial lozenge of wits, which holds forth at the abode of my small child Belknap. I shou'd in truth relish a share in the deliberations

of this agreeable body, since New-England offers no conversation fit for a true-born cynick and despiser of mankind. I am indeed sensible why the late Henry Adams Esq. found the air of his native provinces so oppressive to the reason, and repugnant to the taste. There has, I vow, been no sprightly or civilis'd discourse in the region, since the late evacuation of Boston by His Majesty's forces, and the going away of the loyal gentry.

I am grateful, as before, of the charity you shew in your opinion of *Dagon;* and vastly in your debt for the epistle you writ to Mr. Baird. This worthy man not long ago writ me in a manner which elevates my inherent vanity to unbearable altitudes. He says, 'my work makes a peculiar appeal to his readers', as attested by numerous letters from them; and he desires I shou'd address my mail to his home in Evanston hereafter, that he may be certain of early perusing it. He solicits my tales in unbroken succession, designing to publish the following in his next three issues: *The Picture in the House, The Hound,* and *Arthur Jermyn.* Were it not for an awkward delay in monetary remittance, I shou'd account my self very well off; and assume forthwith the airs and impertinences of an acknowledg'd author. I have, I may remark, been able to secure Mr. Baird's acceptance of two tales by my adopted son Eddy, which he had before rejected. Upon my correcting them, he profest himself willing to print them in early issues; they being intitul'd respectively *Ashes,* and *The Ghost-Eater.* In exchange for my revisory service, Eddy types my own manuscripts in the approv'd double-spac'd form; this labour being particularly abhorrent to my sensibilities.

But I must give over these my remarks, for I must take a nap against the afternoon; when (tho' 'tis devilish cold) I am pledg'd to visit my son Eddy in East-Province, and help him with his newest fiction, a pleasing and morbid study in hysterical necrophily, intitul'd *The Lov'd Dead*. . . .

Theobaldus

149. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

The Walls—
8 November, 1923

Hello, Sonny!

About the anthropological background of *The Rats*—undoubtedly you are right, although all deductions concerning primitive man are too nebulous to permit of dogmatism of any sort. No line betwixt "human" and "non-human" organisms is possible, for all animate Nature is one—with differences only in degree; never in kind. . . . I know that the tendency is to give a separate classification to the Neanderthal—Piltdown-Heidelberg type—using the flashy word "Eoanthropus"—but in truth this creature was probably as much a man as a gorilla. Many anthropologists have detected both negroid and gorilla resemblances in these "dawn" skulls, and to my mind it's a safe bet that they were exceedingly low, hairy negroes existing perhaps 400,000 years ago and having perhaps the rudiments of a guttural language. Certainly, it is not extravagant to imagine the existence of a sort of sadistic cult amongst such beasts, which might later develop into a formal satanism. It is all the more horrible to imagine such a thing, on account of the intimations of extraphysical malignancy in such a thought. Indeed, I think that certain traits in many lower animals suggest, to the mind whose imagination is not dulled by scientific literalism, the beginnings of activities horrible to contemplate in evolved mankind. . . .

That bit of gibberish which immediately followed the atavistic Latin was *not* pithecanthropoid. The first actual ape-cry was the *"ungi"*. What the intermediate jargon is, is *perfectly good Celtic*—a bit of venomously vituperative phraseology which a certain small boy ought to know; because his grandpa, instead of consulting a professor to get a Celtic phrase, found a ready-made one so apt that he lifted it bodily from *The Sin-Eater*, by Fiona McLeod, in the volume of *Best Psychic Stories* which Sonny himself generously sent! I thought you'd note that at once—but youth hath a crowded memory. Anyhow, the only objection to the phrase is that it's *Gaelic* instead of *Cymric* as the south-of-England locale demands. But as—with anthropology—details don't count. Nobody will ever stop to note the difference.

It will interest you to observe the professional rejection of this piece by R. H. Davis, Esq. of the Munsey Co., to whom I sent it at the insistence of my adopted son Eddy. You will note that the contention of Leeds appears to be justify'd; since Davis, tho' admitting it hath some merit, holds it too horrible for the tender sensibilities of a delicately nurtured publick. Leetle Bairdi is become a very great friend of mine and designs to publish my efforts with much regularity. I will enclose an epistle of his, which please return. He hath since accepted *Arthur Jermyn*, and I am not without hopes for *Hypnos* and *The Rats in the Walls*, which I am this day sending him. . . .

Concerning *The Alchemist*—'twas writ in 1908, not 1913, and was publisht in *The United Amateur* for November, 1916. 'Tis not worth beholding, tho' I will send the paper (ONLY COPY—RETURN CVM . MAXIMA . CVRA) as a document of literary history. Shortly after composing this fiction, I decided I knew too little of technique to write effective tales, so destroy'd all I had save that and *The Beast in the Cave*. From then on, I kept silence for nine years; when W. Paul Cook, having beheld the *Alchemist* as resurrected in amatuer print, (it was—by the way—my United credential in 1914) finally flatter'd and hector'd me into writing *The Tomb* and *Dagon*, after which I kept up a pretty continuous stream. . . .

Speaking of books—I sent under separate cover the volume containing *The House of Sounds*, which pray enjoy as much as modernism will permit you, and return at your leisure to *W. Paul Cook, Box 215, Athol, Mass.* . . . If I ever have a book of tales I mean to dedicate it to him; for it is thro' his urging that I resumed the practice of fictional composition. Not that I shall ever have one—but the intention shews the native and un-Galpinian gratitude of my disposition.

I am glad you approv'd the sentiment, tho' condemning the medium, of my tribute to my son Samuelus. He says he hath just writ you, so I presume you are sensible he hath now finisht *The Hermaphrodite*. Certainly, he was not vext at anything you said; but he was in his usual state of melancholy inaction, opprest with misery and impotent to write an epistle. He hopes in the spring to remove to a town less burthensome to his spirits than Cleveland.

Ashtonius languishes in his accustom'd poverty—waiting to be pay'd for the last three sets of pictures in *Home Brew*—and nervous distemper. He hath lately become a writer of indifferent epigrams in the Auburn *Journal*, but I think he wou'd do better by sticking to verses. I

wish that both he and Samuelus might be happier, and am quite convinc'd that a life of artistick seriousness is as foolish as any sort imaginable. Pray don't be a solemn aesthete, Child, but merely a gentleman of taste, bent on amusement and taking your artistical pleasures as lightly as other gentleman take their golf, or whiskey, or clubs, or horse-racing. . . .

Most particularly wou'd I call your attention to that matter which you have in truth notic'd already; the fact that whilst Frenchmen shew a very great skill in plain horror, they lack that ethereal mystick power which lends frantick and cosmical madness to the work of such men of genius as Mr. Poe, Mr. Machen, and my Ld. Dunsany. This force of supernatural wonder—the faint clawing of black unknown universes on the outer rim of space, as I phrase it in my crude unsophisticated way—is a purely *Teutonick* quality, which you ought to recognise and respect as an abatement to your idolatry of Latin polish and coxcombry. Here, as an aesthetick observer, you ought to find plain evidences of *Nordick* superiority; and derive therefrom a proper appreciation of your natural as distinguisht from your adopted race-stock. As for me, I am proud to be a Teuton, and wou'd not wish to be taken as any other sort of man. If you wou'd but value more justly the heritage of your true race, you wou'd find again that pleasure in elder mystery of which the little tinkling sophistications of petit-maitre Frenchmen and Italianated friseurs and dancing-masters have temporarily robb'd you. Be proud, boy, to be an Englishman; and remember that no finer breed of men now walks the earth. In us are combin'd the mysticism of the great northern forests that spawn'd us, and the Latin refinements of the Normans that mingled with us.

* * * * *

The cosmos, child, is simply a perpetual rearrangement of electrons which is constantly seething as it always has been and always will be. Our tiny globe and puny thoughts are but one momentary incident in its eternal mutation; so that the life, aims, and thoughts of mankind are of the utmost triviality and ridiculousness. We are conscious by accident, and during the unfortunate instant that we are so, it behooves us only to mitigate our pain and pass our time as agreeably as we may. Since good sense shews us, that pleasure is but a balance betwixt desire and fulfillment; 'tis the part of reason to avoid needless labour by having as few wants as possible, and gratifying them in a manner so quiet as not to encroach on the pleasures of others and stir them up against us. Nothing is of any importance, and the simple Arcadian shepherd is truly better off than the town scholar and man of taste; because the happiness of the farmer is very easy bought, whilst the latter must pay roundly in hard study for his felicity. I am myself resolv'd to steer the middle course of a settled country-gentleman, seeking such pastimes as an antiquarian temper may incline me to; and neither affecting the Dorick inelegance of a swineherd, nor pampering a needless sensitiveness which finds ease only in great art and deep learning. I am as well off with my simple tastes well fed, as is a man of parts with his exalted aspirations gratify'd by the laurels of the poet, or the sceptre of the prince. I wou'd advise any young man, to purge his mind clear of extravagant notions of divinity and perfection, and his veins clear of extravagant emotions which good sense shews to be mere meaningless effusions of glands into the blood. I wou'd then have him study his own inclinations, and adopt a course of easie action conformable to them; at the same time avoiding offence and troublesome conflict by an honest practice of the precepts of virtue as given in his part of the world. I wou'd furthermore, for his own peace of mind and the general good, have him exalt in the pleasures of pride and strength, and the admiration of his forefathers; rather than sink into the empty ticklings and melancholy-introspections of languid feebleness, effeminacy, and decay. It much more becomes a man to seek a good estate and a sturdy posterity, than to chase howlingly after fame and ideas and stale dissipations which give no more pleasure in the end than honest solidity and contentment. Since the entire plan of creation is pure chaos, and wholly devoid of values, we need draw no line betwixt reality and illusion. All are mere effects of perspective, and that is best which more comfortably lulls us into acceptance of what we have. In art there is no use in heeding the chaos of the universe; for so complete is this chaos, that no piece writ in words cou'd even so much as hint at it. I can conceive of no true image of the pattern of life and cosmic force, unless it be a jumble of mean dots arrang'd in directionless spirals. And so far are real dots and actual curves from depicting the utter formlessness and emptiness of life and force, that they stand confest as artificial as Mr. Pope's couplets when view'd against the bland and nebulous reality they struggle to depict. Thus I take the efforts of your friend Mr. Eliot to be very

well meant, but quite ironically futile. Since all life and thought are but the momentary and capricious inventions of a few stupid minds, and since all values and negations of values are equally meaningless in an infinite chaos where the very conception of a value is a local and transient accident; it certainly follows that *The Waste Land* is no closer than the *Essay on Man* or *De Imitatio Christi* to any such mythical entity as "truth". There is no truth, and all the life we can ever imagine is the artificial and arbitary network of illusions with which we may happen to surround ourselves. We know that all are the mere result of accident and perspective, but we gain nothing by tearing them down. 'Tis indeed uncommon senseless to tear down with a rusty dung-fork a mirage which never really existed. I think it best becomes a man of sense to chuse whatever sort of agreeable fancies best amuse him, and thenceforward to revel innocently in them; sensible that they are not real, but equally aware that since reality does not exist, he can gain nothing and lose much by brushing them away. No one set of fancies, moreover, is better than any other; for the only measure of their worth is their degree of adaptation to the mind that holds them.

* * * * *

On Octr. 21 my daughter Mrs. Gamwell, solicitous concerning my indolent apathy, dragg'd me thro' a region intimately connected with the history of our family; in a walk which tho' reluctantly begun, prov'd in the end uncommon agreeable. We ascended that remarkable eminence just west of the town, known as Nentaconhant Hill, from whose craggy summit we obtain'd the most magnificent view of Providence and environs which either had ever beheld or imagin'd. Outspread to the east stretcht the tapering spires and burnisht domes of the antient city, with myriad roofs fusing to one expanse of ethereal fretwork, and embosom'd by the immemorial hills— the distant, hazy, violet hills, and the near hills gay and feverish with the violence of autumn colour. And beyond the town stretcht the suburbs and the country, all lay'd out like a chart; so that by turning round and looking west one might perceive the wilderness itself—hills and vales in primordial desolation, unmarkt by the presence or memorials of degenerate mankind. All this variety and contrast from one towering steep; city and move of one's foot—the lair of modern corruption and the hunting-ground of the old Pocasset selvages, all in one sweep of the eye—one

turn of the neck. An observatory in the Gothick manner, and somewhat in disrepair, crowns this majestick acclivity.

From Nentaconhant we rambled north and west thro' territory very familiar to our ancestors, yet monstrous chang'd in the eighty-odd years since they dwelt there. Now and then, amidst the incursion of the shabby, squalid industrial peasantry, we cou'd spy some stately colonial farmhouse with gambrel roof and small-pan'd windows, nestling proudly or timorously—as the case might be—under the precipitous lea of the lordly Nentaconhant. Some were sunk to Italian rookeries; some were spectrally deserted, staring with fishily blear'd windows at the scene of decadence; but some—last remnants of a vanishing race and culture—were still held by the decaying and melancholy scions of the antient stock. Around the door of one of these we beheld the sportive anticks of the prettiest black kitten I have seen in these twenty years; and I paus'd to play with him till my daughter dragg'd me away.

We thence walkt to the antient hamlet of Simmonsville—now call'd "Thornton", and the seat of some vulgar manufacturing enterprise with unaesthetick labourers. At a turn of the village street, on an eminence a little remov'd from the modern plebeian huddle of tawdry edifices still stands the archaick (the Colonial) Simmons mansion—white and austere, like the Jumel mansion, with the regal Ionick columns of its portico colossally silhouetted against the western sky. My grandmother visited here in the 1830's, when a small child, and we cou'd imagine her inside the long old windows, primly curtseying, playing the harpsichord, weaving samplers, or making crayon drawings after the manner of the accomplisht young females of her day. I can remember her well, in my own small childhood, as a stately old lady—she died Jany. 26, 1896, long before Little Sonny was born. Ah, me—but the gulf of years that yawns between the golden past and the leaden days we *know*.

The scene now became wildly beautiful by reason of one of the most gorgeous sunsets in the history of the province. The whole west flam'd forth as if—to quote poor Lucian Taylor—the door of some Cyclopean furnace had been thrown wide; and the old mansion stood out black against a veritable holocaust of empyreal fire. The spectacle was a chromatick tumult unearthly and iridescent, nearly every colour having its place—even a vivid and sinister green which seem'd to typify the poisonous corrosion and putrefaction of the decaying elder America. It

was like the phrensy of hysterical cymbals and brasses translated into light and colour—a screaming, terrible thing whilst it lasted. And because it was violent and terrible, it was very beautiful. Before it faded—as everything fades—we had passed the Simmons mansion and come upon a still older house—a mighty farmhouse of 1720, with severe colonial doorway having Dorick pilasters and triangular pediment. Back . . . . back . . . . . down the years. . . .

In the gathering dusk we walkt on to Hughesdale, where the coach-line ends. We came upon it as the first lights twinkled out in antique cottage windows—the small-pan'd windows of little white cottages set back from the highway, with wells and well-sweeps beside them, and white picket fences all about. At the four-corners we stopt; the venerable four-corners where the crossroads wind indolently betwixt borders of grass, and the cottages brood behind high bank walls cover'd with moss, and the schoolhouse and the village church loom white thro' the evening. And on one corner a little shop glimmer'd invitingly—as it had glimmer'd when the young swains and ploughboys stopt to buy snuff and gunpowder on their way to join the rebels in Providence—at the Market Parade, in 1775. It was night now, and we took the stage-coach home. My next trip, on which I had as a companion my new adopted son Clifford Martin Eddy, Jr., was on Sunday, Novr. 4; and led thro' much the same territory as did my trip of Septr. 19 with our amiable confrere Mortonius. It was a quest of the grotesque and the terrible—a search for Dark Swamp, in northwestern Rhode-Island, of which Eddy had heard sinister whispers amongst the rusticks. They whisper that it is very remote and very strange, and that no one has ever been completely thro' it because of the treacherous and unfathomable potholes, and the antient trees whose thick boles grow so closely together that passage is difficult and darkness omnipresent even at noon, and *other* things, of which bobcats—whose half-human howls are heard in the night by peasants near the edge—are the very least. It is a very peculiar place, and no house was ever built within two miles of it. The rural swains refer to it with much evasiveness, and not one of them can be induc'd to guide a traveller through it; altho' a few intrepid hunters and woodcutters have plied their vocations on its fringes. It lyes in a natural bowl surrounded by low ranges of beautiful hills; far from any frequented road, and known to scarce a dozen persons outside the immediate country. Even in Chepachet, the nearest village, there are but

two men who ever heard of it. Eddy discover'd its rumour at the Chepachet post office one bleak autumn evening when huntsmen gather'd about the fire and told tales and exprest wonder why all the squirrels and rabbits had left the hills and fled across the plain into Connecticut. One very antient man with a flintlock said that IT had mov'd in Dark Swamp, and had cran'd ITS neck out of the abysmal pothole beneath which IT has ITS immemorial lair. And he said his grandfather had told him in 1849, when he was a very little boy, that IT had been there when the first settlers came; and that the Indians believed IT had always been there. This antient man with the flintlock was the only one present who had ever heard of Dark Swamp.

So on that Sunday my son and I took the stage for Chepachet, and in due time alighted before the tavern. In the tap-room they had never heard of Dark Swamp, but the landlord told us to ask the Town Clerk, two houses down the road beyond the White Church, who knows everything in the parish. Upon knocking at this gentleman's pillar'd colonial house, we were greeted by the genial owner him self; a perfect rural magnate and Knight of the Shire, than whom Sir Roger himself cou'd not be more oddly humoursome. He told us, that the Dark Swamp had a very queer reputation, and that men had gone in who never came out; but confest he knew little of it, and had never been near it. At his suggestion we went across the road to the cottage of a very intelligent yeoman nam'd Sprague, whom he reported to have guided a party of gentlemen from Brown-University thro parts of the swamp in quest of botanick specimens, some twelve years gone. Sprague dwells in a trim colonial cottage with pleasing doorway and good interior mantels and panelling; and tho' it turn'd out that 'twas not he who guided the gentlemen, he prov'd uncommon genial and drew us a map by which we might reach the house of Fred Barnes, who did guide them. At this point my fountain pen went dry, and Sprague let me fill it from his bottle of ink—a *rustick* fluid whose pallid farewell you may behold at the beginning of this ponderous epistle. After a long walk over the same highroad travers'd by Mortonius and me, we came to Goodman Barnes' place; and found him after waiting all of thirty-five minutes in his squalid kitchen. When he did arrive, he had not much to say; but told us to find 'Squire James Reynolds, who dwells at the fork of the back road beyond the great reservoir, south of the turnpike. Again in motion, we stopt not till we came to Cody's

Tavern, built in 1683 and still affording best entertainment for man and beast. Tho' Eddy much fear'd that coach-passengers wou'd engross all the landlord's attention, in preference to mere foot-travellers, we were receiv'd with proper civility and given excellent food. This circumstance is the more to our good innkeeper's credit, by reason of the anxiety with which his whole household was just then distracted: a very considerable brush fire in a neighbouring field, set from the pipe of a passing coach party, which threaten'd not only the good man's timber land, but even his antient inn itself. Had so venerable a landmark been fated to suffer destruction directly upon my first sight of it, I shou'd have been very much distrest; but before we left, a company of fire-men from Chepachet arriv'd, and quickly extinguisht the menacing flames. The tavern lyes on the main Putnam Pike; but shortly after quitting it and passing the reservoir we turn'd south into the backwoods, coming in proper season to Squire Reynolds' estate. We found the gentleman in his yard; a man well on in years, and having a very markt rural speech which we had thought extinct save in stage plays. He told us, we had better take the right fork of the road, over the hills to Ernest Law's farm; declaring, that Mr. Law owns Dark Swamp, and that it was his son who had cut wood at the edge of it. Following the Squire's directions, we ascended a narrow rutted road betwixt picturesque woods and stone walls; coming at last to a crest that stood mysteriously limned against the fire and gold of a late afternoon sky. Another moment and we had spy'd what stretcht beyond it: to the right the antient farmhouse of Mr. Law, and to the left the most gorgeous and spectacular agrestic panorama that either of us had been beheld or indeed conceiv'd to exist. I can not, I vow, give any notion of it without dropping into verse:

> Far as the Eye can see, behold outspread
> The serried Hills that own no Traveller's Tread;
> Dome beyond Dome, and on each flaming Side
> The hanging Forests in their virgin Pride.
> Here dips a Vale, and here a Mead extends,
> Whilst thro' the piny Strath a Brooklet bends:
> Yon farther Slopes to violet AEther fade,
> And sunset Splendour gilds the nearer Glade:
> Rude Walls of Stone in pleasing Zig-zag run
> Where well-plac'd Trees salute the parting Sun;
> Vext with the Arts that puny Men proclaim,
> Nature speaks once, and puts them all to Shame!

Were this prodigious prospect anywhere within the easie reach and knowledge of the town, 'twou'd be flockt with and noisy revellers on every Sunday and bank-holiday; but obscurity hath effected that unsulli'd preservation which design is impotent to achieve, this region being far south of any great road, and north of a district very flat and notable for its want of pleasing scenes. I doubt if ten men in Providence are sensible it is on the globe. Here, surely, is the inmost spirit of antient New-England; that vivid wood of Mother Earth which our forefathers, and the Indian savages before them, knew and understood so well. We found Mr. Law, whose venerable farmhouse is very curious and engaging, to be of the small country gentry; an handsome blue-eyed man of the middle size, about sixty years old, and having a quaint rustick speech. He inform'd us, that Dark Swamp lyes in the distant bowl betwixt two of the hills we saw; and that 'tis two miles from his house to the nearest part of it, by a winding road and a cart-path. He said, the peasants have a little exaggerated its fearful singularities, tho' it is yet a very odd place, and ill to visit by night. We thank'd him greatly for the civilities he had shewn us, and having complimented him on the fine location of his seat, set out to return to town with the information we shall use upon our next trip. We now know how to reach the swamp most expeditiously, and will not again lose time in devious inquiries. It will be a pleasing day's trip, and even tho' we discover no unsuspected horror, we shall surely behold enough of the darkly picturesque to furnish out a dozen tales apiece. We now walkt back to Chepachet under the onyx and powder'd gold of a rural night sky, having cover'd full seventeen miles afoot, in all. I was monstrous weary, and cou'd scarce stand. . . .

Grandpa.

150. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

23 November 1923

Grandpa's Little Cro-Magnon:—

I tried to get Wells' *30 Strange Stories*, but they haven't it at our backward bibliotheca. Dear, dear, but with such a scarcity one has to write one's own nightmares! But I'm glad Sonny likes his old Grandpa's inflated graveworms.

Yr. obt. ancestor
HP

151. TO MAURICE W. MOE

November 24, 1923

Mocrates, My Son:—

. . . . . On Novr. 21st I resum'd my delvings, walking with my daughter Mrs. Clark thro' the most antient part of Providence, and visiting the one museum which I had never before inspected—the new private museum of Col. George L. Shepley, in Benefit-Street, where may be found the greatest of all collections of Rhode-Island relicks and antiquities. I regret that you cou'd not have seen this place when in Providence, and vow, you must do so when next here; for truly, I got from it more data regarding the early days of the town, than I had ever before gain'd from any one source. There are records, samples of papers and broad-sides, advertisements, maps, pictures, books, proclamations, (one by Gov. Ward, 1762, with GOD SAVE THE KING at the bottom!) letters, autographs, diaries, miniatures, and miscellaneous articles of every sort, giving a very compleat picture of Providence throughout its existence, and shewing the handwriting of all the principal publick men from Roger Williams down. Of much interest are the books, almanacks, and maps printed in French by the naval forces of King Louis, that occupy'd Newport in 1780 and 1781, during the late insurrection. The fleet had its own press—L'Imprimerie Royale de l'Es-

cadre—and produc'd not only isolated works, but a regular newspaper, *Gazette Francaise de Newport*. Its typography was excellent, and its maps both accurate and artistick. As a repository of Georgian architectural designs, this museum hath not any equal in this town. It contains the full Mason collection of photographs of Rhode-Island Colonial doorways, shewing thousands of these classical portals in Providence, Warren, Bristol, Newport, and other ancient towns, (circular enclos'd) together with magnificent sets of etchings and displaying all the Georgian master-pieces of architecture, both publick and domestick, in the American colonies. These latter sets have convinc'd me of something I but vaguely suspected before; namely, that the finest 18th century buildings on this continent are yet unseen by me, being in the original colonial metropolis Philadelphia, to which my peregrinations have not yet extended. This city was very populous, wealthy, and finely built up when Boston and Providence were scarce more than villages, and when New-York was uneasily divided betwixt Holland and English architecture. It accordingly contains Georgian edifices of a splendour unapproach'd by anything I have seen, and will henceforward form a goal of travel, from which only poverty can keep me. I also discover, that Connecticut, and Staten-Island in New-York, abound with Colonial reliquiae of uncommon interest. I must some day see all these things, for I am certain, that nothing interests me so vastly as the scenes and landskips of my 18th century. But of paramount immediate interest to me, were the illuminating views of Colonial Providence, which I shall employ in the essay or book I am planning on the subject.

. . .

Animated by these reflections, I joyn'd my adopted son Eddy on the following day (22nd November—my grandfather's birthday) for a tour of exploration of certain parts of Colonial Providence which I had never before seen or more than vaguely heard of. I refer to the southerly section west of the Great Bridge, around Richmond and Chestnut Streets; now sunk to slums and on that account avoided by me, but prov'd by the 1777 view to be genuinely Colonial. Here indeed I found a world of wonder that for 33 years I had ignor'd! Not a stone's throw from the travell'd business section, tuckt quietly in behind Broad and Weybosset Streets, lurk the beginnings of a squalid Colonial labyrinth in which I mov'd as an utter stranger, each moment wondering whether I were in truth in my native town or in some leprous distorted

witch-Salem of fever or nightmare. I had not thought my own city to be so large and vary'd—so London-like in containing separate woelds unsuspected one by another. This antient and pestilential reticulation of crumbling cottages and decaying doorways was like nothing I had ever beheld save in dream—it was the 18th century of Goya, not of the Georges; of Hogarth, not of Horace Walpole. Eddy knew it, and was my guide. Led by him, I wander'd up hills where rotting Dorick columns rested on worn stone steps out of which rusted footscrapers rose like malignant fungi. Dirty small-pan'd windows leer'd malevolently on all sides, and sometimes glasslessly, from gouged sockets. There was a fog, and out of it and into it again mov'd dark monstrous diseas'd shapes. They may have been people, or what once were, or might have been, people. Only the gods know who can inhabit this morbid maze—On thro' the fog we went, threading our way thro' narrow exotick streets and unbelievable courts and alleys, sometimes having the antient houses almost meet above our heads, but often emerging into unwholesome little squares or grassless parks at crossings or junctions where five or six of the tangled streets or lanes meet and open out into expanses as loathsome as Victor Hugo's *Cour des Miracles*. Eddy informed me, that these little squares are characteristick of the old west side of Providence, but I had never heard of them. Then, when we wou'd reach the crest of some eminence in this uneven ground, we wou'd see on every hand the strange streets stretching down silent and sinister to the unknown elder mysteries that gave them birth . . . grotesque lines of gambrel roofs with drunken eaves and idiotick tottering chimneys, and rows of Georgian doorways with shatter'd pillars and worm-eaten pediments . . . streets, lines, rows; bent and broken, twisted and mysterious, wan and wither'd . . . claws of gargoyles obscurely beckoning to witch-sabbaths of cannibal horror in shadow'd alleys that are black at noon . . . long, long hills up which daemon winds sweep and daemon riders clatter over cobblestones . . . and toward the southeast, a stark silhouette of hoary, unhallow'd black chimneys and bleak ridgepoles against a mist that is white and blank and saline—the venerable, the immemorial sea; the ancient harbour where pirate barques once rode unquietly at anchor. Many of these places—especially a "Gould's Court" of black, gnawing hideousness which I call'd "Ghoul's Court" upon seeing it in the lone pallid lamplight after the sun had set—Eddy tells me are famous in the annals of crime

—but I do not read police reports. There must be crime where so many dead things are . . . the mass'd dead of Colonial decay . . . the dead that draw shapes out of the night to feed and feast and fatten. . . . No, I had not thought that Providence held such places as this. We came out silently.

Thus impress with the metropolitan variety of a town which I had always deem'd a village because I had never seen more than the business and good residential parts of it, I decided to have Eddy guide me thro' the vast and celebrated Italian quarter—Federal Hill—which I had heard him so often describe and extol as quainter even than the Boston Italian quarter—which you did not get to see. Italians are the most numerous foreigners in Providence, and they have a separate place of habitation in which they spend all their lives, with shops, restaurants, and theatres of their own, seldom going "down city" (as they phrase it) from their isolated elevation. Federal Hill was sparsely settled in the Colonial period, a church and a few houses being shewn in Avery's 1777 view. It was later a stronghold of the Irish, till after 1870 the Italians drove them down the northern slope and took the crest for themselves, finally occupying the whole, almost to the foot on all sides. . . . the legions of a Caesar victorious over the Celts. On this occasion we ascended the south slope in the darkness, soon coming upon odd groups of people—old peasant men in corduroy cloaths, and old women with kerchiefs over their heads. The houses, built by the Irish, are of the cheap American type of the middle 19th century. Only on the north slope, in the dark winding alleys by the railway, will one find any of the remaining Colonial houses. But the strange life of the community is in itself sufficiently interesting. Atwell's Avenue, the principal thoroughfare, is a gaudy Italian Main Street with glittering signs and brightly lighted shops whose signs are in the mellow Tuscan—"G. Narducci, Pasticceria" etc. Parts of it, especially near the intersection with the broad arterial Arthur Avenue, rise definitely above the slum class into a sort of exotick brilliancy—it is here that La Sirena theatre sends forth its polychrome lure, and the principal ristoranti flaunt their electrick signs. We stopt at one of these to eat, and obtain'd the first real Italian spaghetti I have had since I was in New York. Seated in this foreign eating-house where only ourselves spoke English, and looking out into the bright street with the glittering Italian signs, we cou'd only with difficulty believe, that the main business

section of Providence lay scarce a mile to the southeast. To me it was utterly and absolutely new; tho' I had once ridden thro' it without getting off the coach, when I shew'd a visitor the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, with the LaFarge windows and mural paintings, in the Irish district beyond. . . .

Providence is in truth a more extensive, vary'd, and colourful city than I had ever suspected; and I mean to see more of its curious wonders. There is much of the antient waterfront to explore—the east front where *all* the houses and warehouses are Colonial, and the west front where Colonial vestiges lurk furtively amidst the factories, coal-pockets, and gas works. . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.,
H. PAGET-LOWE

152. TO JAMES F. MORTON

5 December, 1923

Hail, hail! The gang's all here!

Labour? Vile string attach'd to the fish which it is alone empower'd to draw! Infamous necessity! But at that I'm glad you've got a whack at it, if it helps enhance the tranquillity of your spirit. As for me—I'm neck deep—and without hooking any particular carload of the jack! Tough luck. The latest nuisance is the trade paper game. Harry E. Martin wants me to write up some local department stores for his *supply buyer*, but I'm gawddamned if I've the least notion of how the hell to go about it. And Lynch is panhandling for copy for his alleged magazine on beauty-culture—after doing me dirt by printing my name of a line of sickly texaco that I slung him out of pity last month, on the sole condition that he keep my identity out of it. . . .

Weird Tales? Well, they've accepted *The Rats in the Walls*, *twilit* and all. Cheques? Faith is a noble Christian virtue. The only trouble with S. H. G.'s story was that they changed the title to *The Invisible Monster*—flat and literal—when it was sent as *The Horror at Martin's Beach*. This same Leetle Bairdie wants to call *Arthury Jermyn, The White Ape*. Blah!!!!. . .

Loveman has finished the *Herm*, but has suffered a renewed lapse of

melancholy—"been through hell", as he says. Cleveland oppresses and lacerates his spirit, and he is thinking of a move to *Providence*, where he can bask in Georgian tranquillity and Theobaldian cynicism. It may materialize no more than other proposed Lovemanick moves, but you can bet I'm giving some tall tips on industrial advantages and all that!

Pax Vobiscum!
Theobaldus Avus.

153. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

11 December 1923

H'lo, Sonny!

Grandpa meant to write sooner, but shaky nerves brought on a helpless inaction which has hardly worn off yet. The old gentleman is not good for much these days, and can certainly sympathise with all the afflictions—nerves, ennui, and melancholy—of his small grandchild! But don't you take to rum and tobacco, Sonny, for they don't do anybody any good. They merely aggravate nervous susceptibility and disturbance, coarsen the mind and physique, harden and debase the appearance and every facial expression, and in short ruin every vestige of that virtuous delicacy and fine honour which alone give aesthetick value to the emptiness called life. Just you be Grandpa's nice boy, and write interesting stories, and you won't regret it in the long years ahead. The debauchee is soon burnt out, and becomes merely a red-faced, bulging vein'd hog to encumber the earth; whilst the young man of virtue retains always some vestige of youth's freshness and beauty, and slides gently and imperceptibly into an harmonious middle and old age, at peace with the world, and respected by his children and grandchildren. C. Valerius Catullus is a very poor model to follow, and I would recommend for your greater emulation that C. Laelius, surnamed Sapiens, who was the friend of the younger Scipio, and whose philosophick elegance and stainless life made him the inspiration of M. Cicero's disquisition *De Amicitia*.

. . . . . I do not claim to be a 100% Teuton. My dark hair and eyes forbid me that honour. But when I reflect on the fact that hair and eyes are the first things to be chang'd in a blond race upon the least

infusion of southern blood, the gold-an-blue scheme being very unstable and liable to revert to the more primitive and deeply hereditary brown or black scheme; I am content to survey my ample height and pallid complexion (bleach'd by the deep Saxon forests and Scandinavian snows) and pronounce myself 99.9% Teutonick. This supposition is borne out by my coarse features—the rough-hewn physiognomy of a Viking warrior—and by my enthusiastick response to warlike and imperious stimuli. . . .

As to the artistick capacity of the Nordick in general, I will freely admit that it does not take the most obvious and characteristick foems. The masses of a Nordick race are not so aesthetically responsive as the Mediterranean masses—though even here we have to reckon with the acute musical sensibility of the Germans. But having made all concessions, I now pause to inquire why artistick capacity is any proper measure of value for a race-stock? To my simple old mind, art is merely a more or less unsatisfactory substitute for real life; and when we consider *life* and *action, deeds* and *conquests, governments* and *administrations,* what race since the Romans can compare with us? Did we not pour down out of our native forests and reclaim a degenerate Europe where civilisation, under effete Mediterranean dregs, was dying out? My God! The very name of France comes from our huge yellow-bearded Franks, and in Spain they call a gentleman an *hidalgo—hijo del goda*—son of the Goth—the huge, blue-eyed, conquering Nordick! Fancy a world without its Clovis—or its Charlemagne—the Teuton Karlomann, and the Vikings and Norsemen . . . ho for the frozen seas and the epick of sleet and blood, strange lands and far wonders! Greenland, Iceland, Normandy, England, Sicily—the world was ours, and the mountainous billows heaved with the Cyclopean rhythm of our barbarick chants and shouts of mastery! Art? By Woden, were not our deeds and battles, our victories and empires, all parts of a poem more wonderful then aught which Homer cou'd strike from a Grecian lyre? Ho! Yaaah! We are men! We are big men! We are strong men, for we make men do what we want! Let no man balk us, for our gods are big gods, and our arms and our swords are tough! Hrrrr! The stones of towns fall down when we come, and crows love us for the feast of dead men we give them. The lands shake with the thump of our feet, and hills grow flat when we stride up and down them. The floods are dry when we have drunk them, and no beasts are left when we have killed and gorged. By day we kill and seize, at dusk we feast and drink, by night we snore and dream big dreams of strange seas we shall sail, old towns we shall burn, stout men we shall slay, wild beasts we shall hunt, deep cups we shall drain, fat boars we shall tear limb from limb with our hands, and gnaw with our sharp teeth. Great Thor, but this is life! We ask no more! We know the cool of deep woods, and the spell of their gloom and of the things void of name that lurk or may lurk in them. Bards sing them to us in the dark with great hoarse voices when the fire burns low and we have drunk of our mead. Bards sing them to us, and we hear. Great, gaunt bards with white beards and the old scars of good fights. And they sing things that none else have dreamed of; strange, dim, weird things that they learn in the woods, the deep woods, the thick woods. There are no woods like our woods, and no bards like our bards.

Puritanism? I am by no means dispos'd to condemn it utterly in the pageant of the world, for is not life an art, and art a *selection?* The Puritans unconsciously sought to do a supremely artistic thing—to mould all life into a dark poem; a macabre tapestry with quaint arabesques and patterns from the plains of antique Palaestina . . . antique Palaestina with her bearded prophets, many-gated walls, and flattened domes. The fatuous floundering of the ape and Neanderthaler they rejected—this and the graceful forms into which that floundering had aimlessly blunder'd—and in place of slovenly Nature set up a life in Gothick design, with formal arches and precise traceries, austere spires and three interesting little gargoyles with solemn grimaces, call'd the father, the son, and the holy ghost. On shifting humanity they imposed a refreshing technique, and to an aimless and futile cosmos supply'd artificial values which had real authority because they were not true. Verily, the Puritans were the only really effective diabolists and decadents the world has known; because they hated life and scorned the platitude that it is worth living. Can you imagine anything more magnificent than the wholesale slaughter of Indians—a very epick—by our New-England ancestors in the name of the lamb? But all aside from that—these Puritans were truly marvellous. They did not invent, but substantially developed the colonial doorway; and incidentally created a simple standard of life and conduct which is, apart from some extravagant and inessential details and a few aesthetic and intellectual fallacies in all truth the most healthy and practical way of se-

curing happiness and tranquillity which we have had since the early days of Republican Rome. I am myself very partial to it—it is so quaint and wholesome. But not alone in Puritanism is the Nordic's beneficent influence to be found. Who else could, after the decay of Rome, have revived that overpowering *aesthetick of strength* which in antique days reared to the heavens the colonnades of the Capitolium, the dome of Vesta, the splendours of the Palatine, the walls of the Colisseum, the balconies of the Septizonium, the altitudes of the Pantheon, the colossi and arches of conquering despots, and countless other stone and marble ecstasies of ebullient domination? True, we have never equalled those breathless marvels, for we own ourselves no match for the world-overtopping ROMAN CITIZEN; but alone of all races we have revived—in our master-achievement ENGLAND—that resistless sway which gave them birth, and have anabled the modern world to share in that delirium of artistic excitement and surging pride which must have fill'd every true ROMAN when, looking back from some crest in the road at sunset, he saw limned in flame and gold the domes and columns, vast, prodigious, multitudinous and induplicable, of earth's supreme apotheosis of dominion—THE IMPERIAL CITY.

"Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
Hae tibi erunt artes: pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."

So, Sonny, your old Grandpa is pretty well satisfied to be a Nordick, chalk-white from the Hercynian Wood and the Polar mists, and stout-arm'd to wield the mace, the broadsword, and the javelin. Nordics can buy dark foreign slaves cheap in the market-place—sharp, clever little Greeks and Alexandrians who will decorate our walls and chisel our friezes well enough when tickled with the lash of a Nordic overseer. Our province is to found the cities and conquer the wilderness and people the waste lands—that, and to assemble and drive the slaves, who tell us stories and sing us songs and paint us pretty pictures. WE ARE THE MASTERS!

Yr. obt. Servt.
HP

154. TO SAMUEL LOVEMAN

Happy New-Year!
(January 5, 1924)

Agathon, my Son!

Both the lyricks duly came—and marvellous lyricks they are! One of them shall surely head the first *United Amateur* to appear under my auspices—both of 'em would, if the page were broad enough! Your gift with the lyre is something I can only envy mutely, but you know how keenly and sincerely I appreciate it! There must be something herediary in it—note the enclosed review from the *Boston Transcript* about your late cousin Robert Loveman. He, you know, is one whom Mencken so greatly admires. . . .

And how are the Providential plans? The old town is still here, and beckoning alluringly. Mortonius came and went, and I am sure he will attest to a pretty good time exploring local antiquities according to my latest modes in personally conducted tours. After a festive session in Boston and vicinity he blew in Thursday, Dec. 27, at 11:04 a. m., and Eddy and I were on hand to meet him. I was only fifteen minutes late—a degree of promptness which will through all my after life give me the sensation of being as punctual as a tradesman.

The first objective of our trip was that supreme landmark of Providence, the First Baptist Church, finish'd in 1775. This is my maternal ancestral church, but I had not been in the main auditorium since 1895, or in the building at all since 1907, when I gave an illustrated astronomical lecture in the vestry to the Boys' Club. We found this fane as pleasing within as without, the panelling and the carving above the doors being especially notable as specimens of Georgian workmanship. We ascended to the organ loft, and I endeavour'd to play *Yes, We Have no Bananas*, but was balk'd by lack of power, since the machine is not a self-starter. Later we explor'd the pulpit, and the interesting baptismal font or celestial bathtub behind it, but I had had a cold tub at home, so did not sample the sacred pool. Besides, I didn't know how to turn the water on.

Then we began to climb flight after flight of hand-hewn Georgian steps into the steeple, till finally we were beside the massive bell—cast

in 1775 in London, weighing 2500 pounds, and having the following inscription:

"For freedom of conscience the town was first planted.
Persuasion, not force, was us'd by the people:
This church is the eldest, and has not recanted,
Enjoying and granting bell, temple, and steeple."

A lock't door obstructed our further progress, so we settled ourselves to enjoy the view to be had from that moderate level. It was, I assure you, very beautiful; for we spy'd an amazing number of antient colonial roofs and belfries contemporary with the steeple in which we stood, including the Golden Ball Inn where Gen. Washington stopt, and which now bask'd reminiscently in the midday sun, its row of dormer windows giving forth little twinkles from the small panes. Southward the antique harbour brooded—the blue harbour where the India packets ride at anchor, and the rum, slave, and molasses brigs come from Africa, Charleston, and New-Orleans—the placid harbour with the hoary brick warehouses still as they were in the days of periwigg'd merchants. . . .

At last we climb'd down thro' the beam'd and cobwebb'd mysteries of the lower steeple, sign'd our names in a book, and went out on the antient hillside. We stroll'd on past Georgian facades with iron-rail'd steps and brass knockers, mounted the old-world steps that form a part of Gaol-Lane, linger'd about the quaint vistas of "Tippy Corner", where none but colonial houses are in sight, slid down the unpav'd expanse of Bowan-Street, ferreted out the hidden hillside churchyard of St. John's, where ghouls stalk at evening and where the stones go back to 1730, and finally struck north in quest of the oldest brick house in Providence, (1750), which I had never seen, and which lies in a region that my foot had never trod. And such a region! Antient . . . unbelievably antient cottages and sheds and houses, some of them urban, and some of them farmhouses overtaken in 1740 or 1745 by the growing town. Networks of dusty unpav'd byways darting narrowly and nervously hither and thither off the main streets, and leading down from the crest of old Constitution Hill to the brow of the vertiginous slope that frowns over the river—the antient Moshassuck, at the falls where Goodman Smith's mill and the foot-bridge were put up in 1642. There were all the symbols of the antient town—Olney's Lane, with the gam-

brel-roof'd tavern where the Boston coach us'd to leave every Thursday with passengers and His Majesty's mail—and the first brick house itself, freshly painted and admirably preserv'd, tho' in the worst sort of mongrel slums. Then we turn'd into the maze of colonial alleys toward the river, and suddenly saw a sight of incredible picturesqueness. From one of these lanes an abrupt declivity fell, descending at a steepness almost prohibitive to human feet, and provided with an iron hand-rail. Intersecting at intervals several hidden Georgian lanes on the hillside, it reach'd a group of early stone mill buildings—1815 or 1820—and slid betwixt two of them whose second stories were connected above it with a passage like the Bridge of Sighs, finally crossing the river by a wooden bridge and coming out near Randall-Square, a hideous polyglot slum district. . . .

At this point Eddy had to leave, and the trip of Mortonius, my aunt, and I kept on through colonial vistas till we reach'd the twinkling fanlights of antient Rosemary-Lane or College Hill. There, in a building where Lafayette once slept, we visited the little shop of an old picture-framer, and left the old Providence etching for him to prepare for my study wall. This was half way up the hill, in the heart of colonialism. But turning round and looking down past the old market house, we saw the night starred with the mounting witch-fires of skyscraper windows. I had never seen that vista at night before, and I found it very lovely.

But not long did we tarry, for I was set on shewing Mortonius the region of southwestern colonial horror and decay that Eddy introduc'd to me last month. Across the busy lanes of surging traffick we went, till coming to the venerable Round Top Church (1808) we turn'd into the gruesome court which is the outer vestibule of unnamable elder labyrinths. Dim flickering lights—crawling, shapeless mists and shadows—blear'd windows—crumbling colonial doorways—dank pools, jagged stones, sharp turns, unbelievable convolutions and constrictions—all was as I had found it last month, tho' I cou'd not get either of my companions to own the macabre charm of it. Ghouls' Court was terrible—one shou'd flee away from places where century'd secrets titter inaudibly—

So at length we regain'd the business district, trudg'd to the station and got Jacobus Ferdinandus' valise, ate some sodas and sundaes (tho' they didn't have the fresh fruit salad kind you can get at 105th and Eu-

clid) at Gibson's, bade adieu to my aunt, and set out to walk to the New-York packet along the frightful deserted length of horrible South Water-Street, where murther lurks in the alleys, and one stumbles over corpses in the gutters. Reaching the ship without stumbling, but carrying a confus'd blur of pallid lamps and Hogarth vistas in our eyes, we dispos'd of Mortonious' valise and set out to kill the few moments before sailing time.

We edg'd thro' ghastly channels between black silent freight cars on the India wharf at the southern tip of Providence's eastern peninsula, a region I had never penetrated, tho' I had for twenty years and more wonder'd about it. It was an eldritch wriggle, like that of Alciphron in the tortuous crypts under Egypt, and at last we came out where pale phosphorescence effus'd from century'd rotting piles, and the distant harbour lights bobb'd and twinkled away to the south, the far south, the south of dreams and templed isles, and curious ports, and pagodas of gold with savour of spice and incense around them. Then we edg'd back to the *Concord* frigate, said farewell, and ended the travelogue. Mortonius sail'd into the starry sea—I went to a cinema.

Yr obt Servt:
H. P. L.

155. TO JAMES F. MORTON

8 January, 1924

O most Unsurpassable and Scenically Unimpressionable:

. . . . . Have you seen that precious sissy that I met in Cleveland? Belknap says he's hit the big town, and that he's had some conversation with him. When I saw that marcelled what is it I didn't know whether to kiss it or kill it! It used to sit cross-legged on the floor at Elgin's and gaze soulfully upward. It didn't like me and Galpin—too horrid, rough and mannish for it!

Well—zassat!

Yr. obt. and obsequious
Theobaldus

156. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

8 January, 1924

Hello, Sonny!

Bless my old bones, but how nice that Sonny liked the pretty book his Grandpa gived him! I thought anything about that gorgeous Renaissance would be just the thing for a little Mediterranean boy, but feared it might be merely stale news to one who has read so many more things than his simple old Grandpa has. And now the Old Gentleman is monstrous pleased to know he struck it right, after all! Yes, and 'tis amazing kind of you to speak well of the tiresome varses that the Old Man couldn't help sticking on for good measure! Dear, dear, but a dotard of my years ought to know enough not to try to rhyme any more—yet that's the way we old fellows mumble on, remembering our far, far youth, and the old roseal days when we thought we might be able to write poetry if we kept at it! I'm glad Felis liked what I writ him, and hope he is greatly set up . . . tho' not on the mantel, whence his naughty little Grandpa Belknap sometimes makes him jump down! Ah, me, but Old Theobald likes to see the young folks enjoying themselves!

* * * * *

No, Sonny, there is in Machen an ecstasy of *fear* that all other living men are too obtuse or timid to capture, and that even Poe failed to envisage in all its starkest abnormality. As you say, he is greater than our Eddie in ability to suggest the unutterable; tho' I cannot call him so great as an artist generally, since his narration lacks the relentless force and unified impressiveness which make any work of Poe one concentrated delirium. About Machen as an essayist I know absolutely nothing—but I ask no more of him than to have written *The Three Impostors*.

Mention of S. L. reminds me of this Hatfield person. To be sure, I recall him! Dear, dear! how he used to sit cross-legged on the floor at Eglin's, little white sailor's cap tucked gracefully under one arm, sport shirt open at the neck, gazing soulfully up at Samuelus and discoursing

of the arts and harmonies of life! I'm afraid he thought me a very crude, stupid, commonplace, masculine sort of persons—and am indeed surprised that he recalled me! Hatfield and Hart Crane were mortal enemies, and it use to be amusing to watch them when they met by accident, each trying to humiliate the other by veiled thrusts and conversational subtleties hardly intelligible to an uninitiated third person. And so he has hit the big town! Here's hoping it will be kind to him, and not crush his flower-like delicacy!

. . . . . I have always thought there is a peculiar fascination about provincial towns, where time treads lightly and leaves curious byways, customs, and heritages; all the more fascinating if the town be large enough to contain bewildering and labyrinthine recesses, and little worlds unknown each to the other. I was acutely sensible that Mortonius appreciated not what he beheld, and can but affirm, that he is like the millions who each day tread London's winding ways unconscious of the cryptical marvels unfolded to the eye of a Machen. Mortonius is too much an intellectual ever to appreciate the beauties of the untrammel'd fancy, or to have the delicate soul of a strange scene import to his eyes visions of more than the squalid wood, brick, and stone present in geometrical lines and angles. . . .

. . . . . I read *Tom Jones* over twenty years ago; and whilst I saw it had very great naturalness and merit, it certainly produced no great or favourable impression upon me. What it represented was merely *one* side of the 18th century—and a side that Mr. Addison, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Cowper, Mr. Thomson, and all by best friends both hated and lamented. Surely it is 'life in the raw'—but sink me, boy! who but a savage wants his food uncook'd? I grant you that there is much to ridicule in the finical niceness of the 19th-century. Pox on't, lad, but I hate that aera more than you do! But split me if I can find any particular merit in laying emphasis upon dirt and bawdry! Realism must of necessity deal with life as it is, hence 'tis of no use to omit mention of cheats and pimps and rakes and whores where the subject calls for 'em. What I can't pardon in Fielding—and he shews it more in *Joseph Andrews* than in *Tom Jones*—is his damn'd *sympathy* with the nastiness he depicts, and his insensibility of the greater beauty of restraint in conduct and delicacy in manners. In a word, Child, I look upon this sort of writing as a mere prying survey of the lowest part of life, and a slavish transcript of simple events made with the

crude feelings of a porter or bargeman, and without any native genius or colour of creative imagination whatever. I have perus'd the novelists of the 18th century because they are, with all their faults, of mine own age. But I will not endure such drab dulness from anyone else, and have never seen a book of Dreiser's or read anything of Anderson's save *Winesburg, Ohio*, which I dropt half way through from sheer boredom. The *Erik Dorn* of Ben Hecht I did peruse because it contain'd a hatred for mankind which itself forms an unique and refreshing element in literature. But as for these fellows who love mankind and all its beastliness, why, Child, I don't see what there is in them. 'Fore God, we can see beasts enough in any barnyard, and observe all the mysteries of sex in the breeding of calves and colts. When I contemplate man, I wish to contemplate those characteristicks that elevate him to an human state, and those adornments which lend to his actions the symmetry of creative beauty. 'Tis not that I wish false pompous thoughts and motives imputed to him in the Victorian manner, but that I wish his composition justly apprais'd, with stress lay'd upon those qualities which are peculiarly his, and without the silly praise of such beastly things as he holds in common with any hog or stray goat. I conceive, Child, that the vast store which new-fangled fellows set by bawdry and nastiness, is due simply to the revolt of small-boy curiosity against the excessive hush of the 19th century. It hath very much pain'd me to behold Loveman and Alfredus falling into this trap, and I sincerely hope that you have the more exquisite taste and balance to escape it. There is no more true sense and artistick discrimination in a modern coxcomb's praise of *Jurgen* or *Ulysses*—or of Swift at his worst—than there is in a small boy's praise of the dirty words which a bigger boy has dared to chalk up on the back wall of the stable. Whenever, then, I hear a fellow slop over in ecstasies about some new-fashion'd bawdy writing, I hold him to have deserted the principle of art altogether, and to have dropt into the mere vulgar curiosity of the street-gamin. Nothing in the theory of pure beauty—the beauty that is in a sunset, or a cathedral, or a human figure, or a poem, or an exquisite fear, or a strain of hidden musick—can possibly include in the beautiful such things as the coarsenesses of life. It was not chance—and least of all cheap Puritanism—which excluded the vulgar from the writings of America's only great author—our Edgar A. Poe. He, who saw beauty more keenly than anybody else, knew that it is not

an inhabitant of the stews and publick-houses. And so, Sonny, your old Grandpa sticks to his guns, and refuses to be led astray by the fads and foibles of a fleeting and fallacious aera. I am not a Puritan, nor do I believe in any absolute cosmick values; but I do insist that I have some idea of what is and is not beautiful in the present environment of place and time. Don't let Mortonius—who has some extravagant notions on such subjects—delude you. No mere intellectual is competent to decide a fine aesthetick point. Consider rather the practice of those artists whom you most esteem, and by them judge how much of earth can remain in a quality which is exquisite and exalted in proportion as it rises above the conditions and limitations of mankind altogether. I do not think that any realism is beautiful. A realistick book is often great, but the greatness is not of art at all, but of philosophy or science.

. . . . . You see, Sonny, nothing really amounts to anything; and the deepest learning and wildest pleasures merely turn to ashes before one may enjoy them. Little urban fops chase about after pleasure and get only weariness; serious artists struggle away at tasks that never satisfy them, and that lead only to a frame which never does them any good; grave scholars wear out their lives gathering facts that form but a tasteless and sterile harvest . . . futility interminable and all ingulphing! What is the use? Man is the ephemeron of one cosmic moment; born to no purpose, unknown yesterday, and tomorrow so perfectly obliterated that MANĀ—YOOD—SUSHĀĪ will never recall whether or not he has ever existed. It is all a jest and a delusion—a struggle that can bring no reward, and that has no meaning or merit in the cosmic chaos. To know—to suffer. To be exquisitely alive and tasteful—to suffer more acutely. *Omni risus, et omnia pulvis, et omnia nil sunt.* So I believe that the soundest course for a man of sense is to put away the complexity and sophistication of an unhappy age, and to return into the seclusion and simplicity of a rural 'Squire; loving old, ancestral, and quaintly beautiful things, and thinking old, simple, manly, heroick thoughts which—even when not true—are surely beautiful because they bear upon them so much of the ivy of tradition. That, then, is why your Grandpa is an antient country-squire; because he is weary of complexities and emotions and wisdoms and eruditions that are empty and meaningless; because he thinks that most beauty, most harmony, is to be found in a placid merging with the dreams and illusions which the centuries have hallow'd; because he believes that perfect loveliness resides only in

virtuous patterns which the world has rejected or forgotten—that, Child, is why your Grandpa is an old country-gentleman!

Yr. obt. Ancestor
H P

157. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

598 Angell St.
Jany. 25, 1924

My dear Smith:—

. . . . . Like you, I don't know anyone who is at all congenial here; & I believe I shall migrate to New York in the end—perhaps when Loveman does. But fortunately, all this sterility doesn't disturb me much, for I have never had much inclination to depend on people for amusement. To me all mankind seems too local & transitory an incident in the cosmos to take at all seriously. I am more interested in scenes—landscapes & architecture—I have a very real affection for the old town with its ancient steeples & belfries, hills & corners, courts & lanes, all reminding me of that 18th century & that Old England which I love so well.

. . . . . Providence—founded in 1636—is perhaps the most Colonial & English of American cities, since the solid & generous nature of its early structures has discouraged replacement. Before 1750 it was a prosperous village built along a street where the foot of a precipitous hill dipped into the waters at the head of Narragansett Bay, & sending out offshoots up the hill & on the marshy peninsula across the water, whither led a series of three wooden bridges. Then came a great wave of building & expansion, expressive of the town's rivalry with Newport, theretofore the metropolis. Bricks—locally baked—were given their first trial in place of timber, in the construction of two houses *both of which are still standing*. Land was filled in on the opposite west shore, & a bridge of enormous width & strength was thrown across. New streets were laid out both up hill & on the added "west side" across the Great Bridge, & by 1762 the town was a bustling little metropolis of its region—as such things were then and there reckoned. I speak of this odd date because I have a picture of Providence at that

especial juncture—a picture shewing many buildings even now recognisable. The brick Court & Colony House was finished in 1762, the brick school in Gaol-Lane (opposite Mr. Carter's printing office at the Sign of Shakespeare's Head—building still standing—where was each Wednesday publisht *The Providence Gazette & Country-Journal, Containing the Freshest Advices both Foreign & Domestick*, with the Royal Arms over the heading) in 1769, the brick college building in 1770, the brick Market House in 1773, the great white Baptist Church (our family church, with finest Georgian spire in America—designed by Gibbs, who designed the London churches of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, St. Mary le Strand, etc.) in 1775, the brick Clarendon Tavern in 1775, the Golden Ball Inn (where Washington & Lafayette stopped in 1790, & where under its present name of "Mansion House" Edgar Allan Poe stopped repeatedly in 1846-49) in 1783 . . . & so on; these buildings all remaining today in prime condition & active use. And meanwhile prodigious rows of brick & wooden houses & shops had arisen, all so solidly built that a large proportion are with us yet. Even in busy Westminster St., now our main thoroughfare, it is still possible to recognise at least twenty of the buildings shewn in a panoramic view of 1785. The Georgian tradition lingered very late with us, no architectural change coming till 1825 or 1830, when the pure-Grecian fashion brought us a wealth of Doric & Ionic facades. And the odd things, how much of the old material yet abides. We have our domed Congregational church of 1808, our St. John's tower of 1810, our Unitarian steeple of 1816, & endless miles of streets, waterfront warehouses, courts, & alleys just as they were. I do not think a Londoner could feel very strange or ill-at-ease here, & I am sure I should feel very much at home in London, allowing for the differences between a provincial metropolis & a world-metropolis. The renewed use of Georgian architecture is emphasising the similarity; & visitors tell me that they do not wonder at my 18th century taste after seeing my 18th century *milieu*.

Yet Providence's own realisation of its Georgian quaintness is relatively recent. I was a pioneer in a kind of exultation that the bulk of my solidly commercial fellow-townsmen are just beginning to share.

. . .

With every good wish, most sincerely yrs
H P L

158. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Jany. 26, 1924

Hello, Sonny!

Grandpa thought he'd write and tell you that he hath just perused Wells' *Thirty Strange Stories!* Magnificent plots, but how prosaically handled when one compares them to Machen's work! I do not think *Aepyornis Island* anticipates your dinosaur egg story, and advise you to write the latter. Think of the difference—the dinosaur belongs to aeons immemorially remote and unconnected with anything in human experience, whilst the museum-cellar hatching can be handled with a creepiness wholly alien to anything in Wells. Your idea is far the stronger, and Grandpa will spank you if you don't write your story like a nice boy! I do not consider that *In the Abyss* anticipates my *The Temple*. Wells' undersea dwellers are natives of the deep, and ichthyoid in nature; whilst their city is built to suit them. My submarine city is a work of man—a templed and glittering metropolis that once reared its copper domes and colonnades of chrysolite to glowing Atlantean suns. Fair Nordick bearded men dwelt in my city, and spoke a polish'd tongue akin to Greek; and the flame that the Graf von Altberg-Ehrehstein beheld was a witch-fire lit by spirits many millenia old.

. . . . . Habitations of men should never be *made*—they should be sown, water'd, weeded, tended, and allowed to *grow* by subtle processes. What makes a town really lovely and fascinating, is the quaint irregularity which links it to its geographical location—the suggestions of hill and dale, river and shore—and to the continuous history of its inhabitants—the marks of original settlement, slow expansion, and development in channels and directions determin'd by the topography of the site and aspirations and genius of the people. These things are all that make a city vivid and dramatick and human—all that give it the captivating individuality which differentiates it from any other city. Happy indeed is that town which grew slowly enough to leave traces of the gradual evolution from year to year, and gently enough to preserve the original topographical lines of hill and shore—the lines that are graceful because born of Nature, and that find embodiment in curved streets, quaint

slopes or flights of steps, simple and dignify'd bridges, sea-walls, and embankments, quiet nooks and terraces, and all other vestiges which show man's conformity to Nature rather than man's artificial conquest of Nature by prosaic, repudiatory feats of engineering. Once link a city with Nature and the past, and you have the basis for unending beauty—not only the intrinsic beauty I have cited, but also the loftier beauty of *imaginative wonder*. When streets are new, all alike, and merely affairs of breadth and straight lines and right angles, there is nothing mysterious about them—nothing to allure the fancy and suggest a thousand odd thrills and grotesqueries arising from or obscurely related to the history of the race or of the locality itself. Straight lines and right angles are simply straight lines and right angles the world over, but the delicate and particular curves of a town slowly reared on a certain spot have a priceless wealth of suggestion pertaining to place and people; a suggestion which makes every narrow, devious hillside lane, rich with its mellow limning of antique, characteristick doorways and windows and chimneys and gables, a veritable gateway of memory and mystery inscrutable and ineluctable. Can you imagine any real wonder—any elusive touch of the faery—in great reticulations of overnight mushrooms like Chicago or Cleveland or Los Angeles? Think, on the other hand, of the exquisite mystery of London or Quebec or Paris or Florence or Constantinople or Bagdad—where the reliquiae of centuries blend with the sky on every hand, and where each archaick contour is enhanc'd in beauty by the naturalness of its origin and the added softening naturalness that lies in the touch of time! In such a place every vista is an avenue of tradition and wonder, and every corner an antechamber of thrilling memory and stirring surprise. If you have thoroughly digested all your Macheniana, Sonny, I cannot believe that you have not responded to the magick and witchery with which Machen has invested every winding way and crumbling horizon of ancient London and its labyrinthine elder reaches. London! Majestick, ineffable, and immemorial! Is any man so blind as to think that Minneapolis or Seattle or Detroit will ever hold the least fraction of its multitudinous and cosmick necromancy? I must see London, Child, before I die—London and Edinburgh and Whitby and Chester and Portsmouth and Carnavon and Dublin and Caerleon-on-Usk . . . Machen's *Caermaen*, sacred to IMPERIVM. ROMANVM. ET. LEGIO. AVGVSTANA. SECVNDA. But when I

do see them, I must be able to settle down and never leave the Old Country.

GOD SAVE THE KING

And yet it is a fact that I have at least enjoy'd as much of the antient atmosphere as America can afford, and that I have grown up from birth in an environment not radically different from that of the average English city. Take away the exceptional survivals like castles, abbeys, cathedrals, or a few blocks of Elizabethan or late mediaeval houses, and you find that the keynote of an average British town of good size is the architecture of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and since. Fires and progress have largely eliminated what went before, though one finds such antiquities in many of the smaller villages. Hence New-England, whose principal towns were all founded betwixt 1620 and 1640, and were of swift and substantial growth, hath very largely taken on the semblance of the Mother Land—a semblance promoted by the markedly similar physical geography. In nothern Massachusetts there still remains, as your Grandpa's travelogues have told you, a goodly sprinkling of the old pre-classical houses built before the Wren influence—houses with pointed gables and lattice windows, dating from 1633 to about 1685—whilst of the classically "Colonial" houses there are well-nigh infinite numbers throughout New-England. This classical Wren tradition is overwhelmingly our particular architectural keynote, as it is Great Britain's; and in several of our more shelter'd towns it remains so unimpair'd that one can scarce believe himself outside the eighteenth century. Salem, Porstmouth N. H., Newburyport, Newport, Bristol, Exeter N. H., and East-Greenwich R. I. are among the towns which have suffer'd little change, and which (but for the gambrel roofs) strongly suggest Old England. And of course MARBLEHEAD . . . but I cannot talk of that save in rhapsodies. . . .

Well, you be Grandpa's nice boy!
Yr. obt: ancestor, H. P.

159. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Hello, Sonny! Feb. 1924

As to my admiration for the Nordick type—why, Child, 'tis their ability to take nothing seriously which makes me account them great! This world and all life are an utter trifle—a contemptible farce of futility—and it does not matter in the least what anybody thinks or does from the moment of his birth to the glad moment of his release in merciful oblivion. Therefore the man who cares greatly for this or that, or reflects seriously on what he does, I cannot but call a very great dunce. To have a good time, and be as oblivious as possible to passing events—that I consider the greatest thing in life by inexorable logick, unless one has the courage and fixt purpose to do the most sensible thing and kill himself. Now it is natural to admire strength—to admire the concentrated displays of cosmick energy which produce variety and determine the course of events, and which therefore must necessarily be the original sources of all dramatick situations and potent magnificences. Such strength must be spontaneous and lighthearted, for reflection builds nothing, and it must be martial and ruthless if it is to live up to itself as a purging, cleansing, regenerating force. Where but in the Teuton will you find its grand apex? Who but the Teuton has swept into every dying culture in Europe and revivified it with a verve and abandon which must evermore be beautiful because of what it implied and accomplished? We must always admire a reality more than an imitation, hence no epick poet will ever have the supernal glory of the blond heroes who fearlessly carve their poetry out of life and blood and iron and give clerks and sonneteers and chroniclers something to write about. Even sedentary old Sam Johnson freely admitted that any man must think meanly of himself, who hath not been a soldier or been at sea. It makes no difference whether or not a conquering Nordick be stupid. Character and intelligence are the least important things in the world, for nothing matters but sensation—and if a man gives a certain sensation with line, colour, and external achievements we may ask no more of him. I hold that it is the Nordicks who give the greatest sensations—without whom we should be devoid of those images

and moods which most greatly please us. I do not care who makes literature— but I do care who makes the life that literature feebly reflects. The world may exist in your own brain, but it would not if the deeds of great Nordick men had not put it there. Do not mistake me or deem me inconsistent—I have not any contempt for the pleasures of the man of action. I do not, it is true, enjoy them myself; but that is because I am unfortunately not a man of action. I regret this very much, because it makes me a less wholesome and glamorous figure. But I do not make the error of giving less homage to a supreme type merely because I have the infelicity not to belong to it. It is weakness in me—some subtle decadence of the spirit—which kept me from West Point and a career of glory, and a Teuton's death with shouting and slaying. That career is all which makes the monotony of life really worth enduring—the divine thrill of conscious power; the power to move great things and control the destinies of nations. No puny imitation, no second-hand bookish thrill, has a millionth of the genuine thrill of the strong man moving multitudinous destinies and walking by the side of Fate as brother and deputy. The Nordick has indeed a sense of humour—the supreme sense, in that he sees the hollowness of all intellect and its flat ticklings. He knows how to get from life its real ecstasies—the ecstasies at whose crumbs intellectuals merely nibble. He knows that a thing need not be lacking in delight because it is absurd, and that the great outer gods roar and laugh at the most ironick laughter of disillusion'd man. He has the great secret—the supreme secret of all CHILDHOOD is the one boon of all our miserable existence, and that its preservation in all its illogick, naivete, freakishness, whimsicality, and masterful violence is the only means we have of beating the Fates that seek to cheat us with reason and knowledge and sophistication. The Nordick Teuton is a mystick in a sublimer sense than any other mystick—he is above and outside reason, piddling taste, decorum, ethicks, flabby sentimentality, justice, seriousness, erudition, and all that. He is the primal man—PLAY, SHOUT, HUNT, CONQUER, KILL, LAUGH, RULE, BUILD, and DIE IN THE LAUGHTER OF VALHALLA.

. . . . . Alfredus never spoke a harsh word to the creature, but I suppose he couldn't conceal the contempt of an ultra-masculine personality for such attenuated exquisiteness. Alfie, you know, has no nonsense about him, but is a gruff reg'lar feller with disordered hair, clothes likely to be out of press, and a brusqueness of gesture and

expression which says more than harsh words. . . . On the whole, I think my Alfredus-grandchild can show contempt without words better than any other living mortal. Then too, Galpin unmistakably liked Crane—though acquainted in advance with the darkest side of his character—better than he did the sisters. Crane has at least the external appearance and actions of a man, and for that much Alfredus respected him. Crane didn't like Alfredus, as that precocious child soon learnt through the mediation of Samuelus, but he was not so intolerable a spectacle as his mincing foes. On the whole, Alfie didn't make much of a hit in Cleveland, because the gang there were affected and sissified to the last degree—sentimental, emotional, and given to absurd expressions of the arts they studied in the lives they led. Galpinius is of more solid stuff— steel-cold intelligence with a healthy contempt for mankind and external display, who uses art as the natural amusement of a mind that is greater than art instead of as an intoxication and an excuse for pose and egotistic eccentricity. . . .

. . . . . One who so values love, shou'd realise that there are only two genuine kinds of it: matrimonial and parental. . . .

Providence, which spurn'd Eddie living, now reveres him dead, and treasures every memory connected with him. The hotel where he stopt, the churchyard where he wander'd, the house and garden where he courted his inamorata, the Athenaeum where he us'd to dream and ramble thro' the corridors —all are still with us, and as by a miracle absolutely unchang'd even to the least detail. The radiance of these things imprest my late visitor Sechrist more than anything else in the town. . . .

Now, Child, send Grandpa that horror story! If you will be good and write lots and lots of terrible things, I believe you may have a chance to land them in *Weird Tales,* for as you will see when I send you the Henneberger letter, they are desperately in need of material which is basically unconventional. Pray picture to yourself the curiosity of a fiend-loving Old Gentleman, and delay no longer in mailing Grandpa your nameless monstrosity! About the Ashton Smith reference in my *Hound*—I omitted that myself, on advice of Eddy (not Poe but my local protege C. M. Eddy), who said that the editor would object to such exploitation of an artist-poet whose work I am trying to push with *Weird Tales.* Now that I see how solidly I stand with both Baird and

Henneberger, I am sorry I took the advice—but what's done is done. Another time I may do some free advertising for Smith and Sonny Belknap and Mortonius and everybody!

* * * * *

As you know, I am very much enamour'd of the skyline of New-York, and believe it hath an ethereal beauty which only a fabulous Dunsanian city beyond the east cou'd equal. 'Tis a beauty unique and original, and I can understand Samuelus' adjective of "flowerlike" which he applied to the faery coral growth which springs up out of violet waters to disport with the stars and win the moon's argent admiration. That such a coral growth shou'd be the work of vile human insects, matters not in the least to me. I hate the insects but admire their mineral deposit—so that when I look at that spectacle of majesty and loveliness from Manhattan Bridge I cannot believe that it holds anything so base and nasty as organick life. Lately, in my favourite *Tribune* I came across the first view of the Manhattan skyline which in any way duplicates my own imaginative conception of it. Oddly enough, it headed an article distinctly comick but I cut off the comick part and let the fabulous mystery and aerial vividness of the drawing alone sink into my consciousness. That is what I see when I gaze upon New-York! I will enclose this drawing, which is by Albert Levering; asking you to return it with care. You may have seen it—but it must be separated from its prosaic setting to be really beautiful and exert its fullest intoxicating effect. New-York is very beautiful—it is the only town on earth which fascinates me as Providence does. There are really two New-Yorks the increasingly Georgian New-York of the ground, which passengers on the streets see—the New-York of Minetta Lane and Fraunces Tavern—and the elfin, heav'n-scaling New-York of the air—the New York which rears Babylonian pinnacles for admiration afar off, and is brother to the thin delicate clouds of vernal dawns. The architecture of the future seems design'd to perpetuate this duality of beauty, and none may say what unheard-of-forms may not rise into unsuspected reaches of aether as the decades pass—until the final decadence comes. This flowering of ambitious stone will be utterly original, and will form America's only genuine and spontaneous contribution to the architecture of the world. With such ecstasies of wild beauties above them, I do not see how New-York-

ers can think sordid, circumscribed thoughts, or remain in the bestial wallow which ingulphs not only them but most of the rest of mankind. Beauty and aether should breed beauty and aether!

Yr. most obt. forbear,
H P

160. TO EDWIN BAIRD

598 Angell St.
Providence, R.I.
February 3, 1924

My dear Baird:—

I was delighted to receive your two communications, and to hear that you like *Nemesis*. This delight atones fairly well for the sensation of gastric depression caused by the implication that *Arthur Jermyn* is going to press as *The White Ape!* I wish I could convert you to my point of view regarding the annoying literalness and flaccidity of that latter title . . . but all I can do is say that it is the only title which I could never possibly have applied to that particular tale; that it is at war with the spirit and internal harmonies of the narrative, and clashes fearsomely with the effect of the opening paragraph. One thing—you may be sure that if I ever entitled a story *The White Ape, there would be no ape in it.* There would be something at first taken for an ape, which would not be an ape. But how can one ever get those subtleties across? . . . At any rate, I know I am partly to blame for this, since I voluntarily offered to shorten the original title to *Arthur Jermyn*. Now, however, after seeing just what a feeling of melancholy that un-Lovecraftian caption has given me, I am returning to my original resolve that my titles must be considered as integral with the tales, and the whole rejected unless the titles also are preserved. The weakening in this case was my own, but it wasn't worth while! Thanks prodigiously for the proof-reading offer, of which I shall avail myself with the utmost avidity despite the laboriousness of the process. Ambrose Bierce hated proof-reading, and use to complain of the bother in letters to Samuel Loveman. He read proof for the Neale edition of his collected works. Glad that *Hypnos* is coming. Are you giving me a vacation

for March, or are the *Rats* to gnaw their uncanny course through that issue?

Yes indeed, I have heard from Mr. Henneberger! Cheque? Bless me, no! Such details are so vulgar! But I am told that the twin ventures *Detective* and *Weird Tales* have reduced the Hennebergian capital from plus eleven thousand to minus forty thousand; hence presume that I ought to be a very meek and inaudible minus . . . if minus there be in a matter of aesthetics. Henneberger seems determined to hang on to his venture till the last ditch, and shows a rugged pluck I can't but admire. He spoke of a coming reorganisation to include work from the magician Houdini and the elaboration of gruesome crime material at the expense of fiction, reducing the latter to a novel and two or three short stories per issue. I can't say that this strikes me as following the Machen or Poe tradition in art (unless *Marie Roget* is a keynote in Poe), but if it increases circulation and saves the magazine from annihilation, who shall quarrel too arbitrarily? At any rate, Henneberger has the right idea in savage unrestraint and departure from the conventional point of view . . . I'll bet he'd snap up that Eddy yarn, *The Loved Dead*, which is presenting such a doubtful case! But I should hardly say that H. made me any "proposition", as he intimated to you he might. The only part of his letter that brought me in was a request for a novel of 25,000 words or over, which I shall be happy to send when I finish it. I've nothing of that length complete, but after trying serial stuff for *Home Brew* I experimented a bit with the novel form, and an idea partly shaped which will probably suit Mr. Henneberger's requirements. It is a hideous thing whose provisional title (subject to change) is *The House of the Worm*. All this apart from my big novel idea—*Azathoth*—which will be exotic and highbrow, and wholly unsuited to *Weird Tales*. By the way, I felt complimented when Henneberger expressed his opinion that my *Rats* is the best tale *Weird Tales* ever received! I wish he'd tell sister Bob Davis that!

Henneberger's curiosity about my age, habits, and personality is quite interesting . . . a taste, I suppose, of what I should encounter if I were a celebrity! Have you read Dunsany's *Fame and the Poet?* I vastly admire Dunsany. I must write my autobiography some day . . . every mediocre, uninteresting person of late seems absolutely determined to write his autobiography, especially if he has done nothing whatsoever to warrant it. I must be pompous and colourful, and supply the element

of dramatic interest where life has failed to supply it . . . helas! Lifelong indolence and nearly lifelong ill-health have made my annals as short and simple as those of the class who subsist on *Weird Tales* cheques! *Une vie celebrale*—nothing more, if even that!

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20, 1890, in a large Victorian house in Providence, set on a terrace amidst expansive shady grounds, and close to the fields of what was then the edge of the settled district. His ancestry was that of unmixed English gentry; quite directly on the paternal side, where his own grandfather had left Devonshire as a poorish younger son and sought fortune in the state of New York, and in a Yankeefied way maternally, his emigrant ancestor being the Reverend George Phillips, who came from Norfolk in 1630 with Mr. Winthrop's colony, buried his wife in Salem in the same year, and finally settled in Watertown, rearing a numerous posterity and earning from Cotton Mather the not unfulsome epitaph: "Hic Jacet GEORGIUS PHILLIPPI, Vir Incomparabilis, nisi SAMUELUM genuisset". It is the cankering sorrow of my life, that I am descended through another son than the more than incomparable Samuel! At an early age—an age of very few months, in fact—the future master of literature emigrated to the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, taking his parents with him on account of a desire of his father's to transact business—commonplace thought—in the village of Boston. It was here that first contacts with literary people were established; for as a provisional residence the young philosopher chose that of a friend of his mother whose name is not unknown to fame, but whose finances made co-operative living a very useful expedient at that period—I refer to the late poetess Louise Imogen Guiney. Oliver Wendell Holmes came not infrequently to this menage, and on one occasion (unremembered by the passenger) is said to have ridden the future *Weird Tales* disciple on his venerable knee. But such a career of promise was not for long. At the time, indeed, young Lovecraft showed signs of considerable literary progress. Ever a nervous child, he began linguistic experiments at shortly after one, knew his Anglo-Roman alphabet at two, and at 2.5 was wont to astonish the suburban throng (for the Guiney castle was at Auburndale, eleven miles from Mr. Bulfinch's aureate dome whereon the cosmos rotates) with poetic recitations from the dizzy eminence of a table's top. In 1893, however, his father's health passed into the decline from which it never emerged; so that Lovecraft and his mother

returned to Providence, to that materno-grandpaternal roof at 454 Angell Street under which he originally beheld the solar illumination. But what was tragedy for the elder generation was nothing of the sort to the younger. The future dictator of literature was intensely attached to his grandfather, whose travels in Europe and taste for Italian art made him a varied and piquant converser, and to the whole place with its trees and terraces, fountains and stables, walks and gardens—and best of all, its proximity to the dreaming fields and mystic groves of antique New-England (now solid blocks of homes and apartment-houses) which the young sage's vibrant imagination peopled with every conceivable sort of unreal presence. With the house was a vast array of books—the fusion of two hereditary libraries—and to this the rising aesthete turned when, at four, the *ars legendi* became his. By a curious twist of taste, only old-fashion'd things and fantastic things attracted the infant marvel. Save for vivid tales of faery, and dark whisperings of the nether world, he would read nothing without the "long s", so that his Taste became compleatly that of the eighteenth Century, and his first Writing (or rather hand printing), perform'd at the Age of five, (Script came at the age of seven) hath this selfsame long s as its most salient Characteristic. The child was weak, nervous, and inclined to keep his own company after he found his voluble conversation disrelish'd by those gentlemen of his grandfather's circle who form'd the only persons he ever car'd to talk to. Children he dislik'd on account of their freakishness, and their disinclination to cast their playing into coherent narrative and dramatick channels. Further adding to his unpopularity was his utter aloofness of opinion and independence of utterance. Born amongst orthodox Christians, he was at first a pagan and later (and still) a scientifick sceptick. Born amongst patriotick Yankees and Sons of the Revolution and Cincinnati, he was a dyed-in-the-wool Tory who curs'd the Fourth of July from the age of three, and sang *God Save the King* when other folk sang *America*. A queer duck, altogether—and so frail that formal school was out of the question. Snatches of school appear here and there, but only snatches. After all, a cultivated family is the best school, and I am singularly complacent about the training this young man did not get. He did stick out four years at high school but at the cost of a breakdown which kept him from college and put him practically out of the world till three years ago. In those middle years the poor devil was such a nervous wreck that he hated to speak to

any human being, or even to see or be seen by one; and every trip down town was an ordeal. Not that he ever liked people as well as cats—it is among the felidae that he has had his most valued friends . . . I can assure you that Nigger-Man is (or was, alas!) a glorious and purring reality! But this whole history is one of slow impoverishment and decay. Lovecraft was born to a household of four servants and three horses—and he has seen them all go . . . all of these, and the old home as well, for the death of his grandfather with a burdened estate forced a removal to a small flat three blocks east on the same street . . . the flat wherein this machine is now clicking, but which will probably go in turn during the coming spring, when finances will decree a final disintegration landing me in all probability in New York. Events? Nothing ever happens! That is why, perhaps, my fancy goes off to explore strange and terrible worlds. My mother was stricken in 1919, and one aunt or another has subsequently reigned here. Around 1920-1921, my health began of itself to effect that mending which legions of specialists had for the past thirty years sought in vain to bring about; and I have done more travelling since than I ever thought I should do in my lifetime. In 1920 I went for a visit to Boston, and slept under another roof than my own for the first time in nineteen years. The last time had been in 1901, when nervous nostalgia had forced a speedy return. My daily life is a sort of contemptuous lethargy, devoid alike of virtues or vices. I am not of the world, but an amused and sometimes disgusted spectator to it. I detest the human race and its pretences and swinishnesses—to me life is a fine art, and although I believe the universe is an automatic, meaningless chaos devoid of ultimate values or distinctions of right and wrong, I consider it most artistic to take into account the emotional heritage of our civilisation and follow the patterns which produce the least pain to delicate sensibilities. Thus, although holding the pompous and theocratic philosophy of the Puritans in the most abysmal contempt, I believe in an honour and fastidiousness of conduct which makes me act like a Puritan and earn the name of Puritan from all who are not of that dull breed of cattle themselves. I am myself—alone—as the Bard makes crook-back'd Richard say. All schools of thought I hold in equal contempt.

Ah, yes—that is my history—the history of intellectual and aesthetic experience. It is damned odd that I, a nearly six-foot chalk-white Nordic type—the type of the master-conqueror and man of action—should

be as much of a brooding analyst and dabbler in impressions as any ox-eyed, sawed-off Mediterranean brunet. My hair and eyes are dark, though—I suppose there is something of the Cymric elder Briton in me . . . at times I have liked to think that I am part Roman, as if some provincial governor or general had left his blood in the Blessed Isle, to be later mixed with that of the Saxon and the Norman as they in their turn came. And yet it is the Nordic I most admire—I am sure I would rather be a general than a poet . . . safe preference, since I shall never be either. Futility and ineffectiveness are my keynote. I shall never amount to anything, because I don't care enough about life and the world to try. Heigho! I am a sceptic and an analyst by nature, and early settled into my present attitude of cynical materialism. I was instructed in the legends of Santa Claus and the *Bible* at the age of about two, and gave to both a passive acceptance not especially distinguished either for its critical keenness or its enthusiastic comprehension. Within the next few years I added to my supernatural lore the fairy tales of *Grimm* and the *Arabian Nights;* and by the time I was five had small choice amongst these speculations so far as truth was concerned, though for attractiveness I favoured the *Arabian Nights*. At one time I formed a juvenile collection of Oriental pottery and objects d'art, announcing myself as a devout Mohammedan and assuming the pseudonym of "Abdul Alhazred"—which you will recognise as the author of that mythical *Necronomicon* which I drag into various of my tales. When I was six my philosophical evolution received its most aesthetically significant impulse—the dawn of Graeco-Roman thought. Always avid for faery lore, I had chanced on Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales,* and was enraptured by the Hellenic myths even in their Teutonised form. Then a tiny book in the private library of my elder aunt—the story of the *Odyssey* in *Harper's Half-Hour Series*—caught my attention. From the opening chapter I was electrified, and by the time I reached the end I was for evermore a Graeco-Roman. My Bagdad name and affiliations disappeared at once, for the magic of silks and colours faded before that of fragrant templed groves, faun-peopled meadows in the twilight, and the blue, beckoning Mediterranean that billowed mysteriously out from Hellas into the reaches of haunting wonder where dwelt Lotophagi and Laestrygonians, where Aeolus kept his winds and Circe her swine, and where in Thrinacian pastures roamed the oxen or radiant Helios. As soon as possible I procured an

illustrated edition of Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, and gave all my time to the reading of the text, in which the true spirit of Hellenism is delightfully preserved, and to the contemplation of the pictures—splendid designs and half-tones of the standard classical statues and paintings of classical subjects. Before long I was fairly familiar with the principal Grecian myths, and had become a constant visitor at the classical art museums of Providence and Boston. I commenced a collection of small plaster casts of the Greek sculptural masterpieces, and learned the Greek alphabet and rudiments of the Latin tongue. I adopted the pseudonym of "Lucius Valerius Messala"—Roman and not Greek, since Rome had a charm all its own for me. My grandfather had travelled observingly through Italy, and delighted me with long first-hand accounts of its beauties and memorials of ancient grandeur. This aesthetic trend had its result in a philosophical way, and prompted my last flickering of religious belief. When about seven or eight I was a genuine pagan, so intoxicated with the beauty of Greece that I acquired a half-sincere belief in the old gods and nature-spirits. I have in literal truth built altars to Pan, Apollo, Diana, and Athena, and have watched for dryads and satrys in the woods and fields at dusk. Once I firmly thought I beheld some of these sylvan creatures dancing under autumnal oaks; a kind of "religious experience" as true in its way as the subjective exstacies of any Christian . . . whose unimaginative emotionalism and my unemotional imaginativeness are of equal valuelessness from an intellectual point of view. If such a Christian tell me he has *felt* the reality of his Jesus or Jahveh, I can reply that I have *seen* the hoofed Pan and the sisters of the Hesperian Phaëthusa.

But in my ninth year, as I was reading the Grecian myths in their standard poetical translations and thus acquiring unconsciously my taste for Queen-Anne English, the real foundations of my scepticism were laid. Impelled by the crude but fascinating pictures of scientific instruments in the back of *Webster's Unabridged*, I began to take an interest in natural philosophy and chemistry; and soon had a promising laboratory in my cellar, and a new stock of simple scientific text-books in my budding library. The books will never leave me, but the laboratory, after being transferred to this house, I am giving to my "Alma Mater", Hope Street High School, as final domestic dispersal becomes imminent. Ere long I was more of a scientific student than pagan dreamer. In 1897 my leading literary work was a "poem" entitled *The Poem of*

Ulysses or, *The New Odyssey*. In 1899 it was a compendious treatise on chemistry in several pencil-scribbled volumes. But mythology was by no means neglected. In this period I read much in Egyptian, Hindoo, and Teutonic mythology, and tried experiments in pretending to believe each one, to see which might contain the greatest amount of truth. I had, it will be noted, immediately adopted the method and manner of science! Naturally, having an open and unemotional mind, I was soon a complete sceptic and materialist. My scientific studies had enlarged to include geographical, biological, and astronomical rudiments, and I had acquired the habit of relentless analysis in all matters. My pompous "book" called *Poematha Minora*, written when I was eleven, was dedicated "To the Gods, Heroes, and Ideals of the Ancients", and harped in disillusioned, world-weary tones on the sorrow of the pagan robbed of his antique pantheon. One of the stanzas from my *Ode to Selene or Diana* runs as follows:

> Take heed, Diana, of my humble plea;
> Convey me where my happiness shall last—
> Draw me against the tide of time's rough sea,
> And let my spirit rest amidst the past.

Hitherto my philosophy had been distinctly juvenile and empirical. It was a revolt from obvious falsities and ugliness, but involved no particular cosmic or ethical theory. In ethical questions I had no analytical interest because I did not realise that they were questions. I accepted Victorianism, with consciousness of many prevailing hypocrisies and aside from Sabbatarianism and supernatural matters, without dispute; never having heard of inquiries which reached "beyond good and evil". Though at times interested in reforms, notably prohibition, I was inclined to be bored by ethical casuistry; since I believed conduct to be a matter of taste and breeding, with virtue, delicacy, and truthfulness as symbols as gentility. Of my word and honour I was inordinately proud, and would permit no reflections to be cast upon them. I thought ethics too obvious and commonplace to be scientifically discussed, and considered philosophy solely in its relation to truth and beauty. I was, and still am, pagan to the core. Regarding man's place in Nature, and the structure of the universe, I was as yet unawakened. This awakening was to come in the winter of 1902-3, when astronomy asserted its supremacy amongst my studies.

The most poignant sensations of my existence are those of 1896, when I discovered the Hellenic world, and of 1902, when I discovered the myriad suns and worlds of infinite space. Sometimes I think the latter event the greater, for the grandeur of that growing conception of the universe still excites a thrill hardly to be duplicated. I made of astronomy my principal scientific study, obtaining larger and larger telescopes, collecting astronomical books to the number of sixty-one, and writing copiously on the subject in the form of special and monthly articles in the local daily press. As I mentioned in the preceding letter, my intention was to become a professor of astronomy. By my thirteenth birthday I was thoroughly impressed with man's impermanence and insignificance, and by my seventeenth, about which time I did some particularly detailed writing on the subject, I had formed in all essential particulars my present pessimistic cosmic views. The futility of all existence began to impress and oppress me; and my references to human progress, formerly hopeful, began to decline in enthusiasm. Always partial to antiquity, I allowed myself to originate a sort of one-man cult of retrospective suspiration. Realistic analysis, favoured by history and by diffusive scientific leanings which now embraced Darwin, Haeckel, Huxley, and various other pioneers, was checked by my aversion for realistic literature. In fiction I was devoted to the phantasy of Poe and his congeners; in poetry and essays to the elegant formalism and conventionality of the eighteenth century. I was not at all wedded to what illusions I retained. My attitude has always been cosmic, and I looked on man as if from another planet. He was merely an interesting species presented for study and classification. I had strong prejudices and partialities in many fields, but could not help seeing the race in its cosmic futility as well as in its terrestrial importance. By the time I was of age, I had scant faith in the world's betterment, and felt a decreasing interest in its cherished pomps and prides. By the age of twenty-five I was well on the road to my present cynicism—a cynicism marked by a contemptuous indifference toward mankind in the aggregate, but tempered with an ironic pity for his eternal tragedy of aspirations beyond the possibility of fulfilment.

As I now approach thirty-four I have no particular wishes, save to perceive facts and to receive refined and agreeable aesthetic impressions. My objectivity, always marked, is now paramount and unopposed; so that there is nothing I am not willing to believe. I no longer

REINHARDT KLEINER, MRS. SONIA H. GREENE, AND
H. P. LOVECRAFT IN BOSTON, 1921.

A Lovecraft Silhouette

really desire anything but oblivion, and am thus ready to discard any gilded illusion or accept any unpalatable fact with perfect equanimity. I can at last concede willingly that the wishes, hopes, and values of humanity are matters of total indifference to the bland, blind cosmic mechanism. Happiness I recognise as an ethereal phantom whose simulacrum comes fully to none and even partly to but few, and whose position as the goal of all human striving is a grotesque mixture of farce and tragedy. That is the essence of H. P. Lovecraft. A very queer old gentleman, as all dashing and arrogant moderns will agree!

* * * * *

As to this *Reading Lamp* business—my word! I'm half inclined to believe you've started something! Shortly after your former letter came, I mentioned your recommendation to a friend in New York—the Mrs. Sonia H. Greene whose *Horror at Martin's Beach* you re-named *The Invisible Monster* after I had very carefully removed Mrs. Greene's original title *The Nameless Monster!*—and she, knowing of my indolent habit of never getting around to anything, took it upon herself to visit the office and carry a lot of my stuff (both manuscripts and discursive letters) for the editor or editors to look over. She found the enterprise in the hands of a courteous, obliging, and literary palaeoparthenoid lady yclept Miss Tucker, whose amiability extended to the length of inviting Mrs. Greene to a dinner to meet the actress Mme. Petrova and some Russian princess whose name would be too much for this 1906 rebuilt Remington. But to return to the main thread—this dictatress or virgin of the lamp was very favourably impressed—so much so, Mrs. Greene writes, that her reaction might almost be termed enthusiasm. And as a result she told Mrs. Greene that she intended to write me about some reviewing proposition . . . which I shall certainly welcome if it means a more than theoretical augmentation of my fiscal balance. Thus your kind suggestion may possibly result in my gathering a few berries in a new pasture—though advance optimism is never judicious. At all events I thank you . . . and thank you also for the reading-lamp bracket enclosed in yours of the 28th. If I ever nail that 25-fish bevy of biblia (it's only twenty-five dollars worth—the fifty was the combined sum of three separate prizes!) I shall begin my pickings (if so permitted) with the complete works (as far as published) of Arthur Machen. Slave as I am to his daemoniac spell, I don't own a

bally line he ever wrote—for the Knopf reprints are all affairs of too recent date to coincide with my bygone days of financial solvency. *Certe, nullas bananas hodie habemus.*

Ever yr. most obt. Servt.
H. P. L.

161. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Young Man with Spectacles:— 7 Feby. 1924

. . . . . But about *Weird Tales*—bless me, I've been getting so many inside glimpses into that of late, that I feel as though I own'd it! When I answer the letters in question, I will show them to you. . . .

. . . One is from Baird, . . . but the main one . . . is from Henneberger, who it turns out is . . . the actual owner of the magazine.

. . . He . . . proposes . . . installing Farnsworth Wright (a mediocre Chicago author) . . . as editor. . . . Henneberger has lost $51,000.00 on his two magazines, and is planning a big reorganization. He will introduce a column by the magician Houdini, and wants to cut down the fiction to one novel and two or three short stories per issue, filling the rest of the space with written-up morbid crimes of real life. . . .

. . . . . He flattered me outrageously, calling my *Rats in the Walls* the best story *Weird Tales* has ever secured. . . . But one thing interests me—Henneberger wants a novel or a novelette from me—something unspeakably terrible, and over 25,000 words in length. I think I shall comply with his request, developing a monstrous and nocious idea which has for some time been simmering unwholesomely in my consciousness—a ghastly thing to be intitul'd *The House of the Worm*. . . .

And your Grandpa hath read *The Terror!* Child, 'tis monstrous well done, with an horror that gathers each moment to the imminence of catsatrophic evil. No one can so well as Mr. Machen suggest dim regions of terror whose very existence is an affront to creation. This tale I conceive to be inferior to *The Three Impostors*, not only because of the excessive looseness of the author's later style, but because of the laborious explanation at the end. One shou'd never state an horror when it can be suggested. . . .

As to pornography—no Child, I don't believe you enjoy it! You've

heard all the big boys praising it, and you think it's awfully grown-up and everything . . . but I don't believe you like it for yourself any more than I used to like the tobacco I so assiduously smoked for effect before I put on long trousers. There's nothing beautiful or artistick about it, any more than the idealisation of certain ultimate digestive processes would be; and its only value is extrinsick—as a necessity in the detail'd and realistick depiction of mankind in psychological fiction. I am undogmatick enough to affirm that it hath no interest in itself, and that its apparent interest amongst the young is wholly factitious, and deriv'd from that curiosity which false education and unwise reticence impart. When I was six or seven I was of course curious about the allusions which I did not understand in adult books, and about the prohibitions imposed by elders upon my conversation. Being of a scientifick and investigative cast, I naturally followed up the mysteries step by step in encyclopedias and other books—for with my temper no one dared seriously restrict my reading. Ending with the medical books of my physician-uncle, I knew everything there is to be known about the anatomy and physiology of reproduction in both sexes before I was eight years old; after which curiosity was of course impossible. The entire subject had become merely a tedious detail of animal biology, without interest for one whose tastes led him to faery gardens and golden cities glorified by exotick sunsets. Curiosity, the one impelling motive, had been satisfied in this field, and thenceforward drove me into other fields apart from mankind—the fields of chemistry, and the ultimate composition of matter; astronomy, and the utimate nature of the universe; legendry, and the ultimate possibilities of the imagination. . . . Whether or not this element, or "humanness" of any kind, has a true and intrinsick place in aestheticks, I am neither dogmatick nor interested enough to dispute seriously. It may, though personally I don't believe it. I must have told you long ago that I consider anything connected with man as sadly cramped and wanting in universality. . . . I think anything based on low instinct necessarily tawdry, local and limited to a vast degree. Freedom—the lofty freedom that puts a great imagination outside mankind, outside the world, outside the universe—that I take to be the true godlike inspiration. Man is a brood of detestable vermin—a curse upon this planet, or at least a trivial incident of no ultimate significance. I respect only such minds as ignore or minimise him—such minds as that of the early Dunsany, who dreampt of Pegana's gods and of the unsubstantial visions of their sleep, which are the worlds.

Of course I may be wrong . . . probably I am . . . but nothing in the cosmos is of the least importance, so I am not in the least concern'd whether I be right or wrong. I know what interests and pleases me, and what wearies and bores me. That criterion is sufficient for me. Keep your Thomas a Kempis, and I will take my Machen! . . . I . . . writ a piece in the manner of Dean Swift wherein the true grossness of the subject might appear, and the true vileness of immorality might vividly be display'd. If the rough draught be yet in my files I will here copy it for you—I writ it some three years gone, and with a carelessness which must excuse its many asperities of style.—Yes—here it is:

THE PATHETICK HISTORY OF SIR WILFUL WILDRAKE:

By L. Theobald, Jun.

Dedicated to the Rt. Hon. Reinhardt Kleiner, Gent.

In elder Days, when ruttish Rips
Were always pardon'd for their Slips;
When CHARLES (as if to set the Pace)
With Doxies swell'd our British Race,
There liv'd a Rake of antient Name
Whose Sires had known a martial Fame;
But who, indiff'rent to the Sword,
Fought softer Fights, and gayly whor'd.
This Brat, of rampant Squire begot,
Was sure design'd for Lecher's Lot:
At Birth he had a roving Eye
That winkt at wenches passing by,
And ere he cou'd in Speech converse
He got a Bastard on his Nurse.
When ten the Boy had known with Pride
Each Trollop of the Countryside,
And pass'd so ably did he whore 'em,
The old *Jus Trium Liberorum!*
His Father, liking not to fee
So swift a Growth of Peasantry,
(Or yet a Rival quite so bold as he)
Ere long the little Satyr sent
To travel on the Continent;
But many a Tale his Tutor told

That prov'd the Stripling still more bold.
He charm'd the *easie* Gallick Jades,
And Bitches of *Italia's* Shades—
God help us all if Years ahead
Our Sons must fight the Troops he bred!
(Myself, I think it downright Treason
To wench abroad in any Season.)
But in due Time young WILDRAKE came
Back to our Isle to vaunt his Fame,
And gain the Prize our King design'd
For Merit of a gallant Kind.
Behold him now at ev'ry Ball
That frets the Peace of Windsor Hall;
A Maccaronie of Renown
With ev'ry Baggage of the Town;
Bold with the Trulls, and quick to boast
Of Vict'ries o'er each reigning Toast,
Nor slow to hint he hath been rash
With Lady *Blank*, or Countess *Dash!*
One idle Day a Nymph he knew
Prov'd pleasing to the Royal View,
Whereat our crafty riggish Imp
To serve his Fortune turn'd a Pimp:
The Fray was won—the Maiden blighted—
And WILL, to pay his Virtue, knighted.
(I need but add, the Drab was made
A Duchess, grand in red Brocade.)
Whene'er some pious Fool wou'd snivel
That such damn'd Raking pleas'd the Devil,
Our love-lockt Goat wou'd wink in Scorn
And vow that he for this was born;
For sure, the only Joy he knew
Was of the *Cyprian* and the Stew,
Whilst he wou'd rather far be dead
Than out of some loose Mopsy's Bed.
Of Husbands WILL was much in Awe,
And smil'd the more, the less he saw;
But *Cupid* oft will craft provide,

So WILDRAKE early learn'd to hide.
Now all went well, till one sad Day
WILL'S Nose beam'd out with redder Ray,
And powder's Leeches cry'd that sure
He must depart to take the Cure.
Not once but often did they force
The rake-hell Blade to change his Course,
Yet spyte of all the poor Wretch grows
Pain'd pox'd, and putrid with his Woes.
The years as well their Tribute claim,
They seam his Face and bend his Frame,
Till ere his Mind his State can see,
He finds no Joy in Venerie.
The Ladies flee as he draws near,
And ev'ry Strumpet costs him dear,
And what is worse, each bawdy Fling,
No spark of Pleasure now can bring.
Bred up to live on Lust alone,
A Courtier by *Priapus'* Throne,
He sees ahead a weary Waste
Whose Bliss he never learn'd to taste.
"Alas!" he whines, "had I but thought
"Of what vast Ills by Love are wrought!
"Had I but train'd my mind to glimpse
"Some Goal above my Whores and Pimps!
"Fifty and feeble, I must crave
"And ogle vainly to my Grave,
"Whilst even then (if Crones err not)
"My itching Ghost will haunt the Spot!"
But one last Joy our WILDRAKE learns,
The while in pox'd old Age he burns;
For tho' the Flame of Love be low,
In Godliness new Beauties glow.
The Rake, his genial Ardour spent,
Turns pious, proud, and penitent;
Dons sober grey; trys Church each Week
To doze, or hear the Parson speak;
Too old to whore, the Rip grows chaste,

And damns the Bliss he once embrac'd.
Resolv'd to wed, he seeks a Maid
Of Age and Chancres unafraid;
An ugly Chit, tho' young and sound,
And bred on her ancestral Ground;
Nor (save for Errours with a Groom)
Devoid of Dian's virgin Bloom.
With this sweet Nymph the Rake essays
In rustick Peace to end his Days;
Trades Bawdry for a Patriot's Fire,
And turns a stolid country Squire.
Three infant Forms the Household bless,
Entrancing in their Loveliness;
An idiot Girl, a weakling Boy,
And one small Saint, his Mother's Joy,
Whose Groom-like looks his lover's Sire annoy.
So ends poor WILL, whom Parents praise
For prudish Tongue and virtuous Ways;
First to reprove a lick'rish Air,
And first to stone with erring Fair.
'Tis he that rails with righteous Zest
At Modern Nymphs in Style undrest'd
With shrinking Petticoat and naked Breast.
His Merits all the Country fill,
And Heirs adore him for his Will;

No one (aloud) can think with Ease
That Death so good a Man will seize.
Nagg'd, cuckolded by doltish Wife,
The Hypocrite concludes his Life;
Once hot for *Cupid's* Pleasures only
He pines—dull, rotten, lewd, and lonely!

Yr. obt: ancestor, H. P.

162. TO JAMES F. MORTON

Great Spieler of the Lighter Arts:— 9th Feby., 1924

Yeh—I dissolve yuh of all stolid indiff'runce to wot is big and fine and noble in colonial and sinister architecture! It's the nacherl-grown brand for these parts, and if we don't put it back on the map to stay, yuh kin deflect me south for a syzygy of twilit parallelopipedons! But I gotta train youse literal guys to lamp more'n what ya gets in vulgar line and shadow. Ya wanna edicate yer glims to projeck a kinda aesthetic mem'ry onto all the dope around youse, so as the most commonplace dump or gangway'll take on a weird slipp'ry glamour from the light inside yer coco. That's what this here baby Art Machen learns ya to do—he pulled a swell line on just that in the 1st spiel in his *House O' Souls*. O say though—I seen a new book of Artie's—it's call'd *The Terror* and it's about war time. Kinda swell, but wit' a little 2 mutch diagram tacked onto de end. Well well and wot kinda dump yuh got in Sout' Brooklyn? Yes yes go on yuh int'rust me strangely. Here's hopin' to gawd I get on de spot before they croaks the ol' hangout—I'm all for the cold shimmy joints!

The Hound was my own title—as you'd orta remember, you havin' heerd it the day or 2 after it was wrote, and handin' me de tips what made me change it on bot' ends! But *Artie Jermyn's* playin' in hard luck, seein' as Leetle Bairdie's hell bent to call it *The White Ape* . . . BLAH! I give the proofs of dis de onct-over yesterday, them bein' sent becos of 3 miss prints in the *Houn-Dawg*. . . .

Yures for citizen soverenty,
Theobaldus

163. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG 14 Feby., 1924

Maleficious Hippocampus:—

Yes, Child, *Weird Tales* is certainly shovin' a lot of work at your aged Grandsire! Entire new job—to rewrite a strange narrative which the magician Houdini related orally to Henneberger; a narrative to be amplified and formulated, and to appear as a collaborated product—"By Houdini and H. P. Lovecraft." Henneberger demanded a telegraphed reply as to whether or not I'd accept the job, and promises INSTANT PAY on delivery! I wired him an affirmative, and am now at work familiarising myself with the geographical details of the Cairo-Gizeh locality where the alleged adventure is set—especially with the singular subterranean place betwixt the Sphinx and the second pyramid known as "Campbell's Tomb".

It seems that once Houdini was in Cairo with his wife on a non-professional pleasure trip, when his Arab guide became involved in a street fight with another Arab. In accordance with custom, the natives decided to fight it out that night on the top of the Great Pyramid; and Houdini's guide, knowing of the magician's interest in exotic oddities, invited him to go along with his party of seconds and supporters. Houdini did, and saw a tame fistic encounter followed by an equally mechanical reconciliation. There was something off-colour and rehearsed about it all, and the wizard was hardly surprised when suddenly the frame-up was revealed, and he found himself bound and gagged by the two Arabs who had faked the combat. It had all been prearranged—the natives had heard of him as a mighty wizard of the West, and were determined to test his powers in a land where wizards had once ruled supreme. Without ceremony they took him to an aperture in the roof of the Temple of the Pharaoh's (Campbell's Tomb) where a sheer drop of fifty-three feet brings one to the floor of the nighted crypt which has but one normal entrance—a winding passage very far from this well-like opening. Producing a long rope, they lowered him into this abode of darkness and death and left him there without means of ascent—bound and gagged amidst the kingly dead, and ignorant of

how to find the real exist. Hours later he staggered out of that real exit, free, yet shaken to the core with some hideous experience about which he hesitates to talk. It will be my job to invent that incident, and give it my most macabre touches. As yet, I don't know how far I can go, since from a specimen Houdini story which Henneberger sent me I judge that the magician tries to pass of these Munchausens as real adventures. He's supremely egotistical, as one can see at a glance. But in any case, I guess I can weave in some pretty shocking things . . . unsuspected lower caverns, a burning light amidst the balsam'd dead, or a terrible fate for the Arab guides who sought to frighten Our Hero. Maybe they can rig up as mummies to scare Houdini, and as such enter the crypt themselves . . . afterward being found dead with clawlike marks about their throats which could not possibly have been made by the hands of Houdini. The more latitude Houdini allows me, the better yarn I can evolve—I'm asking Henneberger to get me as much as possible from the versatile showman. In the same letter Henny sent me an advance copy of *The Rats in the Walls,* booked for the March issue. There are some misprints, and a sickening failure at illustration; but outside of that it's O. K.

Yr. antient ancestor
H P

164. TO JAMES F. MORTON

19 Feby., 1924

O Fountain of Felicity in a Desert of Monotony:

Weird Tales? Boy—what I told yuh afore was only the beginnin'! I'm hearin' damn near every day from Henneberger—the owner of the outfit—and just had a special delivery order to collaborate on an Egyptian horror with this bimbo Houdini. It seems this boob was (as he relates) thrown into an antient subterraneous temple at Gizeh (whose location corresponds with the so-called *Campbell's Tomb* (not Paul J.'s) betwixt the Sphinx and 2nd pyramid) by two treacherous Arab guides—all bound and gagged as on the Keith circuit—(him, not the guides) and left to get out as best he might. Now Henneberger (who

is beginning to do some personal directing over Bairdie's head) wants me to put this into vivid narrative form—it having merely been told orally by Hoodie. I've shot back a query as to how much sheer imagination Houdini'll stand for—since I gotta idea he tries to put over his Munchausens as straight dope, in which he figures most heroically. But if Henny and Hoodie give me a free hand—then b'gawd I'll pull a knockout! I'll have them guides dress up as mummies to scare the bound Houdini—yet have Hoody escape without encountering 'em. And then, when Hoodie takes the police to the scene, I'll have the guides found dead—strangled—chok'd lifeless in that anticent necropolis of the regal stiffs—*with marks of claws on their throats* . . . claws . . . claws . . . principal and subordinate clawses . . . *which could not by any stretch of the imagination belong either to their own hands or to the hands of Houdini!!!* Brrr . . . I hope them guys gives me leave to plaster it on as it should be plastered! Henny says that Houdini wants to get in touch with me about some books or other when he gets back from a lecture tour. Well—here I am, and it's all jake with me if dey's any jack wit' in reach o' me lunch-hooks! I'm a practical man, and ya kin get anyt'ing outa me if ya flashes a fat enough roll! Oh gawd—I forgot to tell ya that Henny has *come acrost* wit' a cheque for ONE HUNDRED BERRIES! (No spoofin'—100—count 'em—100—Not a misprint. Sweared to before J. Flatt Tyre, Not'ry Publick, my commission expires July 52nd, B. C. 1066.) But I'm still sportin' a 7⅛ Kelly. This sort of blah is a flash in the pan, and w'en *W. T.* goes blooey yuh kin' find Old Theobald hangin' out at the same ol' blind pig on the corner. . . .

Tibaldus

165. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Feby. 20, 1924

Thou Maleficious Little Dictionary-Shredder!

I keep all vivid architectural cuttings now, for I have practically abandoned literary for architectural interests. I find poetry only in breathing wood, brick, stone, and marble. . . .

And Machen! If he only *would* get a haircut and leave off that inevitable hat! But maybe he's bald on top. I don't agree with him on the Victorians—they were ugly and distorted. Of course he is right when he says that their primness was merely a pose and a mask. We all know that there was more disgusting license and debauchery in their day than in ours, for all their pallid hypocrisy. But as a purely aesthetick and non-moral critic I don't care about all that one way or the other. Vice is simply social inferiority and ugliness, and life is apart from art. But I hate the age of Victoria because it had false perspectives and opinions which made its zests and hopes flabbily ridiculous, and because in general—taking all the fine arts as a whole—it represented as nearly total an eclipse of taste as we have seen since the post-Elizabethan or post-Jacobean collapse. My gawd—think of those French roofs and baroque facades—those new-Gothic-Romanesque-Byzantine unnamabilities that leer here and there in N. Y., and fairly shriek aloud in the less progressive towns! Yes—and *costume*. O Montreal! Look at the pictures of those freaks in Dundreary whiskers and freak collars and ascot ties and bobtailed cutaway coats and uncreased cylindrical trousers—O gawd! And all this isn't merely outré as judged by our present standards—it is something as fixed and stable as any aesthetic standard we possess—against all Greece and Rome and every other age when beatuy had any place in the world. FAUGH! As for a *relish for life and letters*—God pox un! but that is the silliest thing of all! Life is a nightmare and letters are an affectation. Both make me ineffably sick with their hollowness. To get away from life and all visible external forms—to spit on the universe from unconsider'd spheres of crystal that know not man nor joy nor feeling—to laugh coldly and heartily with yellow-bearded gods amidst the lengthening shadows of Ragnarok! Humanity—life—letters—zest—the earth—the commonplace—bah!—I spew them all out and roar with the warrior-spirits of night! I hate man, literature, pretence, scholarship, aspiration, sophistication, humour, and all the rest of the sickly show! For me the abyss, and the spaces between the stars where outlaw-daemons stalk unsmiling and unpurposefully. Yah!!! . . .

Lays of Ancient Rome? Why, Sonny, I worshipp'd 'em before there was any little Belknap in the world at all—'way, 'way back in the yellow nineties when I was young myself . . . if I every was young. Macaulay was a poet that once—and even elsewhere, though he conceal'd

it in prose. All grandiose men are poets—in fact, I do not think any style is beautiful except what degenerate moderns sneeringly call "the grand style". I spit upon modernity, and shout Alala! With the glittering consular legions of the Republic as they stride with iron sandals over a conquer'd world. In those *Lays* Macaulay struck the one note which has pow'r to swell my aged breast—POWER . . . IMPERIVM . . . GLORIA ROMANA . . . and the multitudious colour of a vary'd world of wonder made Roman by the march of the Gold Eagles! S. P. Q. R.! . . .

. . . . . The Nordick has the divine knowledge of life's utter worthlessness, and that's why he longs to fling it away or forget it in battle and feasting and shouting. He plays that he may not think—for thinking is the most absurd thing in this damnable, monotonous universe. And as for Puritan inhibitions—I admire them more every day. They are attempts to make of life a work of art—to fashion a pattern of beauty in the hog-wallow that is animal existence—and they spring out of that divine hatred of life which marks the deepest and most sensitive soul. I am so tired of hearing shallow asses rant against Puritanism, that I think I shall become a Puritan. An intellectual Puritan is a fool—almost as much of a fool as is an anti-Puritan—but a Puritan in the conduct of life is the only kind of man one may honestly respect. I have no respect or reverence whatever for any person who does not live abstemiously and purely—I can like him and tolerate him, and admit him to be a social equal as I do Clark Ashton Smith and Mortonius and Kleiner and others like that, but in my heart I feel him to be my inferior—nearer the abysmal amoeba and the Neanderthal man—and at times cannot veil a sort of condescension and sardonic contempt for him, no matter how much my aesthetick and intellectual superior he may be. It is a very deep feeling and because it is a very deep feeling amongst huge blond men of the woods and seas I hold it to be as sacred and authentic as any other human feeling. However—I am no such slave of consistency that I blindly adore every ultimate consequence and ramification of Nordick impulses. I am among the first to see the grotesqueness of the attitude of aggressive ultra-moral criticism; and whilst I deem industrialism an inevitable sequel of scientific and mechanical discovery, I am none the less sorry that it exists. It has destroyed beautiful things, just as your beloved Latin sophistication has destroyed beautiful thoughts. I hate it all, and spit upon it all, for I am

a simple big white man who likes to sit at the edge of the forest at evening, whilst the elders of the tribe draw their cloaks of deer-hide tighter and tell strange stories in the light of dim embers. As to *property*—why god rot un, boy! that is merely a measure of POWER, which is the supreme value of all normal mankind! You can't belittle in any strong normal man the love of property, unless you can give him some other and more vivid symbol of possession and of the power to sway the physical destinies of his fellows. Only valour in war is of equal or greater significance, and that is a difficult thing to revive in these days of wholesale, mechanical, long-distance combat.

I see a great deal of sense in owning property. You may have the whole world in your brain, but that world is merely a reflection of the real world, and would soon be starved for new material if not refreshed by the presentation of varied external impressions which only the possession of property can procure. Books are very feeble things. Neither you nor I, for all the classics we have read, has even an hundredth of the joy of Greece and Rome which comes to the millionaire whose yacht and car enable him to linger indefinitely under Mediterranean skies and drink in through all five senses the glory which we are never likely to know save through the dense filter of the visual imagination. At heart I despise both intellect and conscious art. I wish only to enjoy things—to receive a maximum of agreeable impressions with a minimum of effort either mental or physical. All life is hollow and futile—it means nothing, and I want nothing of it but passive dream and simple childhood memory till the greater boon of oblivion comes. My taste? Simply a wistful longing for the perpetuation of those early fancies and tribal memories which moulded my imagination when I was very young.

Yr. obt. ancestor
H P

166. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

25 Feby. 1924

O Black but Comely little Suleiman ben Daoud:—

. . . . . Sonnets, it seems to me, are preëminently the medium for complete ideas—in short, for a poetry as nearly intellectual as poetry can be without ceasing to be poetry. There is something inherently reflective and analytical about the very form of the sonnet—or at least it strikes me that way.

And now, Child, pity your poor old Grandpa Theobald, who by March first must have in Henneberger's hands a tale he hath not yet even begun to write! Inshalla! ٢ ٢ ٧٧٧ ٧ ٧٦! My Egyptian research at the library proved indubitably that Houdini's story is *all* a fake, and that there is no great sunken temples on the Gizeh pyramid-plateau. This means that I must invent some unknown sunken temple—at the same time adhering to that literal verisimilitude on which Henneberger insists. It's a tough job—and the result will be just as commercial as you claim your *Desert Lich* tale is. . . .

My poor protege Eddy is ill with something almost approaching penumonia—and his father having telephoned that he needs cheering up, Grandpa's going to see him tomorrow night. He was here only a week ago yesterday—a valiant little Nordick who keeps buoyant and cheerful despite all the assualts of adverse fate. Poor as hell, saddled with a wife and three children, frail as glassware, and rebuffed by editors, he can yet stave off melancholy and smile and whistle like a boy! Heigho—it's a great life!

Well, be a good boy!

H P

167. TO MAURICE W. MOE

598 Angell Street
Providence, R. I.
Inauguration Day
March 4, 1924

Sieur St. Maurice:—

So this is the end! It is all over! He casts us aside like roses that are faded and leaves us to plod over the world's weary paths alone an' forsooken for ever! Twin rivers of tears from Appleton and Providence mingle to form a new ocean, whereon float barques of sorrow. Eheu! Why, oh, why did the artist Mocrates leave the paths of fancy and settle down to be a "solid citizen" with a thoroughly adult life whose functions are all "definitely purposed?" With H. L. Mencken I weep at the great American mania for "right-thinking" and "forward looking". If everybody is going to be so damned adult, then who the h. will sing in gardens at evening when the moon is tender and the west wind stirs the lotos-buds? (Once there came into the stern granite city of Teloth a youth, vine-crowned, his yellow hair glistening with myrrh and his purple robe torn with briers of the mountain Sdrak that lies across the antique bridge of stone; and he sang of the twilight, and the moon, and soft songs, and the window where he was rocked to sleep as the lights came out one by one and shadows danced in the marble streets below, and the sun of morning bright above the many-coloured hills in summer, and the sweetness of flowers borne on the south wind that made the trees sing. And when the archous bade him cease his songs and apprentice himself to Othok the cobbler he said, "Wherefore do ye toil; is it not that ye may live and be happy? And if ye toil only that ye may toil more, when shall happiness find you? Ye toil to live, but is not life made of beauty and song? And if ye suffer no singers among you, where shall be the fruits of your toil? Toil without song is like a weary journey without end. Were not death more pleasing?" Thus spake the youth crowned with vines and scented with myrrh, who came into Teloth from the hills and told men that he was Iranon, who had been a Prince in remote Aira, the city of marble and beryl.)

H. PAGET-LOWE.

168. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
March 9, 1924

My dear Aunt Lillian:—

I need not say how glad I was to receive your delightful letter and the accompanying matter. But pray don't feel lonesome, since you are most certainly coming right along hither yourself! Bless my old bones! Dost fancy the Old Gentleman would transfer the family seat without sending for his first-born daughter? You will feel better and more active here—I wish you could behold Grandpa this week, getting up regularly in the daytime, hustling briskly about, and even being able to replace a vast amount of facial tweezer technique with honest, simple, and rapid gilletting. And all this with a prospect of regular literary work—my first real job—in the offing!

Meanwhile—and here prepare for revolutionary news—there is no need to worry about my securing an adequate room, or being well taken care of (doddering patriarch that I am) until you arrive. 259 Parkside is pretty homelike with the fine Colonial secretary cleared out and devoted to my use, and will be still more so when all my things—and yourself—reach here.

By this time the drift of this ponderous epistle will have begun to make itself clear. The selection of 259 Parkside as a *permanent* residence, rallying-point, and successor to 454 and 598 is in truth the only naturely logical and thoroughly common-sense solution of the problem created when finance disrupts the Old Homestead and forces aged Theobald to "give over" his listless midnight mooning and helpless hermitage for a more active life.

That more active life, to one of my temperament, demands many things which I could dispense with when drifting sleepily and inertly along, shunning a world which exhausted and disgusted me, and having no goal but a phial of cyanide when my money should give out. I had formerly meant to follow this latter course, and was fully prepared to seek oblivion whenever cash should fail or sheer ennui grow too much for me; when suddenly, nearly three years ago, our benevolent

angel S. H. G. stepped into my circle of consciousness and began to combat that idea with the opposite one of effort, and the enjoyment of life through the rewards which effort will bring.

At the time, this doctrine seemed to me singularly impracticable; for how could I ever maintain—or even begin—a programme of activity and achievement when engulfed by the uninspiring seclusion surviving from a weak and nerve-racked childhood and youth? How, I wondered, could anyone so sensitive to environment ever keep up and apply himself to a career of genuine labour without the constant stimulus of vigorous, understanding, and sympathetic literary companionship—the companionship which adds to an enlivening energy the rarer and more potent boon of perfect psychological comprehension?

Such were my reflections—reflections all the more marked when Magnolia, N. Y., etc. showed me how marvellously I actually did rally in response to companionship of the right kind; companionship which I saw no way of securing permanently as the incentive to an active life, and which therefore only seemed to emphasise the difficulty of breaking away from the tentacles of ingrained inertia and oblivion-seeking.

But meanwhile—egotistical as it sounds to relate it—it began to be apparent that I was not alone in finding psychological solitude more or less of a handicap. A detailed intellectual and aesthetic acquaintance since 1921, and a three-months visit in 1922 wherein congeniality was tested and found perfect in an infinity of ways, furnished abundant proof not only that S. H. G. is the most inspiriting and encouraging influence which could possibly be brought to bear on me, but that she herself had begun to find me more congenial than anyone else, and had come to depend to a great extent on my correspondence and conversation for mental contentment and artistic and philosophical enjoyment. Being, like me, highly individualised; she found average minds only a source of grating and discomfort, and average people only a bore to escape from—so that in our letters and discussions we were assuming more and more the position of two detached and dissenting secessionists from the bourgeois *milieu;* a source of encouragement to each other, but fatigued to depression by the stolid grey surface of commonplaceness extending on all sides and relieved only by such isolated points of light as Sonny Belknap, Mortonius, Loveman, Alfredus, Kleiner, and the like.

S. H. G. was not tardy, I believe, in mentioning to you and A. E. P.

G. sundry phases of her side of this mutual indispensability; but as a follower of the unsentimental tradition, reluctant to be spoofed about a matter which was truly more rationally psychological than sentimental, I was naturally more conservative in giving estimates of my side—although of course I freely extolled the revivifying effects of my Magnolia and Parkside visits, and of S. H. G.'s various visits to the Providence or Eastern New-England area.

With a congeniality so preponderant, and having such a vital bearing on the progress, activity, and contentment of those concerned, one might well wonder why some permanent programme of propinquity was not arranged over a year and a half ago. Radical events, however, do not develop hastily; no matter how sudden their conscious and immediate planning, or their final occurrence, may seem to be. You know Theobaldian reserve, Theobaldian conservatism, and Theobaldian adherence to the old order of things till some *deus ex machina* roughly descends to override all indecision and precipitate an abrupt turn of affairs. In this case finance, pessimistic weighing of all life against cynidic oblivion, sheer inertia, reticence, and a blind clinging to the hibernatory past as represented by uncommercial daytime sleeping at 598, all united to maintain a listless *status-quo*. Then dawned the inevitable need of doing something definite—the need to "get up and get" industrially, or make good my ancient plan of shuffling off to a Swan Point subterranean repose. The old sleep was over, and unless I wished to face a new and voluntarily eternal sleep I must secure the settled and bracing environment which can electrify a fat, ambitionless, and drowsily senile shuffler into a real man and professionally capable entity.

New York! Of course! Where else can one be alive when he has no vitality of his own and needs the magic spur of external inducement to active life and effective toil? And Parkside? Seemingly sudden, yet where else should one go when that is the seat of the greatest encouragement, inspiration, and congeniality? A "room" somewhere might be all very well—but how stupid to accept clumsy makeshifts when a real home was waiting, with all the care, kindred taste, regard, and incentives for waging the battle of life that a weary, sensitive, and otherwise spiritless Old Gentleman might wish? Of course there is always the financial question—bogie of the bourgeois—which naturally deferred any suggestions of mine till it was rationally laid to rest amidst the full, free, logical, and sanely un-attitudinized discussion which preced-

ed the move. Parkside was there, and would be paid for just the same whether or not shared by the aged Theobald. That same Theobald, moreover, would come not as a burden but as the filler of a lonely void and the bearer of aesthetic and intellectual congeniality to one who had not found this quality in others. More still—and this was his own point—he would of course contribute to the common fund as much as he safely could . . . and easily as much as he would otherwise pay for a "room"; adopting a more responsible basis when warranted by substantial earnings. In short—for artificial prides and hackneyed notions was substituted the rare and reverend principle of comfortable adjustment and intelligent co-operation.

At this point—or earlier—or a minute later—you will no doubt ask why I did not mention this entire matter before. S. H. G. herself was anxious to do so, and if possible to have both you and A. E. P. G. present at the event about to be described. But here again appeared Old Theobald's hatred of sentimental spoofing, and of that agonisingly indecisive "talking over" which radical steps always prompt among mortals, yet which really exceeds the fullest necessary quota of sober and analytical appraisal and debate. Wondering discussion, incredulous exclamations, sighs of "I never would have thought it", and all that sort of thing are infinitely exhausting to a sensitive personality after calm reason has had its leisurely reflection and expression, and made its logical decision. It hardly seemed to me that, in view of my well-known temperament, anyone could feel even slightly hurt by a decisive and dramatic gesture sweeping away the barnacles of timidity and of blindly reactionary holding-back. The step, once well considered, was for each an individualistic one; and the news will be broken to the amateur circle only after this more important message has been completed. Even Little Belknap yet remains to be called up by his Old Grandpa!

So, epochal and stupefying as it sounds, (pray don't faint, or I shall feel that all the preceding paragraphs of artistic preamble have gone for naught!) the unbelievable is a reality. Old Theobald is a householder at last, and (hold in readiness the smelling-salts) a bona-fide partner with that most inspiring, congenial, tasteful, intelligent, solicitous, and devoted of mortals and co-workers, S. H. G., in the venerable and truly classical institution of Holy Matrimony!

(RECESS FOR RECOVERY OF POISE)

Yes, my daughter, the Old Gentleman has brought you a new moth-

er at last! Gradual and sudden at once . . . for backed as it was by a mature evolution of years, and long dreamed of vaguely, academically, and objectively as a possibility for some remote future, the imminent certainty scarcely crystallised till the final week; when the actual "brass tacks" of moving and settling came up with a coldly realistic insistence not to be denied.

My general health is ideal. S. H.'s cooking, as you know already from me and from A. E. P. G., is the last word in perfection as regards both palate and digestion. She even makes *edible* bran muffins! She is also a fresh-air specialist, and as great an insister on carefulness and remedies as you are with the camphor discoids—already she has deluged me with a nose and mouth wash, and has made me heal with vaseline the cracked lip which was open all winter—to say nothing of the place where I skinned my shin slipping downstairs that time last week—when I tripp'd on a trip to the attic. And—*mirabile dictu*—she is at least *trying* to make me stick to the Walter Camp exercises known as the "Daily Dozen"! The headache prescription came safely, and I shall get a bottle of my Old Reliable—although so far I haven't had a headache since the wearing off of the one induced by the Houdini-Henneberger rush. Decidedly, Old Theobald is alive as he was never alive before!

So much for that. Now to get you folks in on the celebration! You—and this is already an irrevocable dictum of Fate—are going to live here permanently. No negative decision will be accepted, and if you don't come voluntarily you'll be kidnapped! And that goes for A. E. P. G. too, whenever she isn't otherwise in demand industrially. Tell her to come along for her sojourn here just as though there were a "room" to look for. It's all the better—for now she will have no responsibility, and all the time can be devoted to sightseeing at a leisurely rate. You likewise must do some sightseeing when you get here—and at a rate doubly leisurely. One sight a day—and the Old Gentleman won't permit you to get tired!

Meanwhile there are a few things I should like right away—and in mentioning this I must not omit thanks for the Belknap book and the dual express shipment, both of which have already arrived, after some petty vicissitudes on the part of the latter. Of the following list the *first two* items are *very important*, and connected with the literary business brought up by Miss Tucker—at whose office, by the way, I am bidden to call at four p. m. tomorrow, bearing as much of my pub-

lished and unpublished work as I have in N. Y. The others can follow more at leisure, being connected with comfort, atmosphere, and the like, rather than with commercial opportunity.

LIST

1. The tin box on the middle shelf of the glass-doored cabinet, bearing all my unpublished manuscripts.
2. The pile of magazines on and under the tabouret, including the complete file of *Weird Tales* and the *Home Brews* with my two serials.
3. My new wrap or dressing-gown.
4. My calendars—daily Dickens, colonial doorway, and Paul Revere's Ride.
5. My *old* Webster's *Unabridged*, from the east (clock-bearing) bookcase, and my red Stormouth's Dictionary from the south bookcase, on a lower shelf, at the very end next the table.
6. My postal scales.
7. The tin box of Gillette blades.
8. When convenient—the precious cabinet with all its contents.

Well—as Sandusky phrases it—that's that! Here's hoping the news isn't giving you and A. E. P. G. too great a jolt, and that you'll recognise amidst the surprise how miraculous a salvation the whole thing is for an erstwhile aimless Old Gentleman who always needs a bomb set off under him to make him move. It looks as if there weren't any more need to worry about Ancient Theobald's future, for if there's anything in him, he's surely got a lifelong assurance of the sort of care, companionship, and environment needed to bring it out.

And so I conclude—awaiting first your congratulations and later your presence. S. H. sends an overflowing fount of regard and affection to both you and A. E. P. G., and adds her urgent voice to the chorus of demand that you come hither first for the reception (date of which we'll supply) and then permanently. If I've overlooked anything essential in these pages, pray forgive it and find an explanation in the bewildering and inordinate length of so important a document.

With every sort of love and good wishes, and hoping to see you soon, I have ye honour to subscribe myself,

Yr. most aff: nephew and obt. Servt.
H. P. L.

169. TO JAMES F. MORTON

259 Parkside Avenue
Bklyn, N. Y.
March 12, 1924

Bismillah, O Sheik ul Islam!

Well, Kid, having thought up all the ordinary, regular ways of giving you a jolt, but finding you impervious to the shafts of my strange and violent personality, I'm herewith springing on you the posolutely latest, patent-applied-for device for the infinitesimal splintering of an ingrained and well-nourished phlegmaticism. Give me credit for being tolerably original, at least!

You will gather from the above date line that I am at this writing considerably nearer that South Brooklyn haunted house than I was at last reports. You will also gather, if you go in for detective stuff, that the old Remington is along with me—most unusual suggestion of permanency for a mere visitor. My gawd, the plot thickens!

Well, to make a short-story long, it appears that Grandfather Theobald is camped out here for good. How come? Oh, just the capriciousness of old age! Yuh see, this sheik stuff of yours is damned catching, and I thought I'd try a bit of it—since I'll try anything once—in that more conservative fashion which befits a staid elderly person of Colonial tastes and Novanglian background but imperfectly shed.

In other words, Old Theobald is hitting the high spots on a partnership basis, the superior nine-tenths of the outfit being the nymph whose former name has just been canned in favour of mine own on the doorplate at the above address.

Yes, my boy, you got it the first time. Eager to put Colonial architecture to all of its possible uses, I hit the ties hither last week; and on Monday, March the Third, seized by the hair of the head the President of the United—S. H. G.—and dragged her to Saint Paul's Chapel, (1766) at Broadway and Vesey Streets, where after considerable assorted genuflection, and with the aid of the honest curate, Father George Benson Cox, and of two less betitled ecclesiastical hangers-on, I succeeded in affixing to her series of patronymics the not unpretentious one of Lovecraft. Damned quaint of me, is it not? You never can tell what a guy like me is gonna do next!

No—I'm not puttin' over any spoof! It's the real stuff, and if you could lamp the nifty little certificate George slipped us you'd believe it. It's straight goods—the inhabitants of this dump are H. P. and Sonia H. Lovecraft—and if you're from the Ozarks now, you'll migrate away from there in something less than a week, when you get the swell engraved announcement (really engraved—you can feel of it and everything) that Dutton's is soaking me 62 bucks for. (No—not 62 for yours alone, but for 200).

* * * *

. . . . . BOY, that Houdini job! It strained me to the limit, and I didn't get it off till after we got back from Philly. I went the limit in descriptive realism in the first part, then when I buckled down to the under-the pyramid stuff I let myself loose and coughed up some of the most nameless, slithering, unmentionable HORROR that ever stalked cloven-hooved through the tenebrous and necrophagous abysses of elder night. To square it with the character of a popular showman, I tacked on the "it-was-all a dream" bromide—and we'll see what Houdie thinks of it. I have an idea Henny will have to stand for it, because it came in so late that there won't be a damn second to change it—and it's already announced. . . .

About the Ardinii Varini—o gawd and montreal! This blow after both S. H. and I have been stuffing an envelope just for you! And I even picked up a beharding'd envelope in Central Park t'other morning as I was taking my constitutional prior to delving into antique Aegyptus at the Met. Mus. Well—here they are as a lawst farewell—and you'll find some of your precious men higher up amongst 'em if you search with sufficient diligence. I'm damned if I'll stop now to sift 'em! Lud, Sir, but I fear the profusion of the memorial issue will impair that scarcity which is the measure of value amongst virtuosi of distinction, so that all your pains will have been expended for an incommensurate reward! . . .

Most obt. Servt.,
Theobaldus

170. TO JAMES F. MORTON

259 Parkside Avenue
March 14, MDCCCCXXIV

Arise, Sir James!

As to the fitness of a Church-of-England ceremony—gawd, boy, but you do take your religion serious if you think that side of the question had anything to do with it! Background, id—background! Don't you see the aesthetic impressiveness of investing a momentous decision with all the quaint and picturesque beauty of gesture and ritual that nearly two thousand years' practice has gently woven into the inmost texture of our civilisation! Do you give the hook to Greek myth merely because you don't believe literally in the anthropomorphic existence of the twelve Olympians? Religion, my son, is a pleasing fiction associated inextricably with the artistic progress of our culture; and deserves just as much recognition as any other ornament. Did I not imply as much last December when I admired the First Baptist Church, and sought reverently to play *Yes, We Have No Bananas* on the venerable organ? . . .

. . . . . The aeons and the worlds are my sport, and I watch with calm and amused aloofness the anticks of planets and the mutations of universes. . . .

Yr. Obt.
Θεοβάλδος
THEOBALDVS

171. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Avenue
Bklyn, N. Y.
March 18, 1924

My very dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . This is no ordinary bourgeois household where conflicts of interest and authority, and all that sort of thing, develop. It

is the transferred Phillips centre—the reincarnation of 454 Angell Street—and would not be in any sense complete unless presided over by the logical head of the clan! This is no spoof—I can't begin to say how much real delight and sense of background and affectionate solidity your presence will bring! And this wish is not merely my individual one—which may indeed be taken for granted—but the combined wish of both members of the firm, and as intense in the new partner as if she had been a charter member! Bless my old bones! Do you suppose I would ever have planned any domestic arrangement, or looked ahead with pleasure to any domestic arrangement, which did not include my daughter L. D. C.? Later we expect to have larger quarters; but meanwhile you will find this flat larger than you have imagined, and amply capacious enough to accommodate our presiding genius. . . .

I hope to be working soon on the tentative chapters of the weird book, and am meanwhile inspecting a contract for the handling of work which Miss Tucker has submitted for approval. I think I shall make two amendments before affixing my signature—one to exempt collaborated writing from the scope of the document, and the other to ensure non-alteration on the part of the Tucker-Allen firm. The latter provision would stipulate that my original manuscripts be used as typed by me, "down to the last comma and semicolon", as I told Baird when sending my first stories to *Weird Tales*. By the way—could you send me the *duplicate* copies of *Weird Tales* now on the top of my bedstead? Miss T. wants to show some of these things around when marketing my work, and I don't wish my best file copies soiled or frayed or perhaps lost. Have you purchased the latest issue with *Arthur Jermyn* (here called *The White Ape*) and *Nemesis?* There are two misprints in the latter, as follows:

Stanza Three, last line—for *water* read *waters.*

Stanza Five, last line—for *curs'd* read *cursed.*

I am quite flattered at the advance notice given *Hypnos,* and hope that the public may receive it as favourably as the editorial staff did. . . .

As to literary stuff—Henneberger made a special trip to Murfreesboro, Tennessee to show my new story to Houdini, and the latter took to it marvellously—writing me a note at once, which I answered at his New York address, 278 West 113th St. This morning Houdini answered in a most cordial note, promising a longer reply soon, and asking me to call on him. . . .

. . . . . You will see by this epistle that the typewriter *did* arrive. So did everything else, wherefor I am mightily grateful. Now follow them yourself, and all is perfect! . . .

Yr. most aff: Nephew & obt. Servt.:
H. P. L.

172. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

259 Parkside Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
March 21, N. Y.

Hello, Sonny!

Grandpa and Grandma got his nice congratulations, and hope on Sunday to see their good boy! Meanwhile the Old Genteleman will wind up with one more travelogue before that glorious period when Sonny will be in on most of his travelogues in person!

I am glad the Big Event didn't make you faint! Analysts, I presume, might have foreseen it in the growing congeniality of the United's President and Official Editor; but even the most gradual evolutions seem sudden when their ultimate results become manifest. The projected move to N. Y. . . . discussions thereabout . . . more discussion . . . and lo! That becomes finally precipitated which must have been years in slow unconscious preparation! We thought we'd give the world a knockout, so didn't tell a soul—even my aunts—till it was over and we were about to depart for Philadelphia on a Colonial honeymoon. Later came the notifying, the approval of both Grandpa's daughters, and the happily coincidental visit of Mrs. Gamwell to friends in Hohokus, N. J., which puts her very much in touch with us here. You'll see her Sunday, Sonny, if you're a good boy and come over! Grandpa means to settle down here and do some intensive cash-corraling in local pastures unless—as a subsequent paragraph will develop—a thunderbolt comes out of *Weird Tales*'s office and lands me in ugly, modern, crassly repellent CHICAGO . . damn the possibility!

And now to take up the travelogical thread. My Aegyptian card to you was my last Providential word. On that Sunday I took the 11:09 train for the Grand Central, duly arrived at 3:40, and spent the

evening with the bride-elect and with Miss Tucker, editor of *The Reading Lamp*, who was a weekend guest here. This latter dame, a shrewd ex-Baltimorean of old and distinguished stock, has taken an enormous fancy to "the wife", and has all sorts of propositions for me in a business way—contacts for placing work, speculations anent a book of essays on weird survivals in America, and all that sort of thing. I shall go easy, though, because I don't want to be bound to anything which would interfere with my Henneberger-Houdini prospects, which look to me a bit more aureate and alluring. But I digress. Monday morning all three Parkside habitants rose early and were out—Grandpa on a dual mission in which the traditional felicity of approaching matrimony was considerably alloyed by a heavy worry of wholly unconnected nature. What worry, you ask? I'll shed light . . . and impart the sad news that I LOST, just before taking the N. Y. train, the entire typed manuscript of my Houdini story, whose triumphant conclusion I had so blithely announced to you! My gawd! Think of it! I had sat up all Saturday-Sunday night to get the rush typing done . . . and now all the fruits thereof were gone! It remained, then, for me to get the thing retyped somehow, and mail it to *Weird Tales* at the earliest second possible . . . . a grisly skeleton at the feast! Thus on my wedding morn I hasted to the *Reading Lamp* office, where Miss Tucker was damn generous in letting me use the whole stenographick force in one mad effort to replace the lost text. No use—before it was half done the hour for more momentous steps had arriven, and I had met the bride-elect in the final license-ring rush . . . . to say nothing of a good Italian dinner somewhere in thirty-somethingth street! The license stuff? Dead easy! We beat it to the Brooklyn borough hall, and got the papers with all the coolness and *savoir faire* of old campaigners . . . you ought to have seen your old Grandpa, Sonny! Brigham Young annexing his 27th, or King Solomon starting in on the second thousand, had nothing on the Old Gentleman for languid fluency and casual conversation! Then we prepared for the historick spectacle of the execution—hopping a taxi and proceeding at once to the Place de la Guillotine.

And what was that place? Why, Sonny, how can you ask such a question to an old British Colonial ever faithful to His Majesty, King George the Third! Where was it that Richard, Lord Howe, Admiral of His Majesty's fleet, worshipp'd from 1776 to 1783—and where H. R. H. the Prince of Wales (later the Prince Regent and finally King George IV) was a communicant whilst a midshipman with the fleet? Where, indeed, can one find most strongly Old Theobald's traditional and mythological background—a background intensified by the marriage of his parents in Boston's venerable St. Paul's? (1820) Yes, Sonny—of course you guess'd it! St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway and Vesey Streets, built in 1766, and like the Providence 1st Baptist design'd after St. Martin's-in-the-Fields! GOD SAVE THE KING! I'll give you a booklet of the place if you want it.

In the Church Street parsonage we hunted up the resident curate, Father George Benson Cox, who upon inspecting the license was more than willing to perform the soldering process. Having brought no retinue of our own, we avail'd ourselves of the ecclesiastical force for purposes of witnessing— a force represented in this performance by one Joseph Gorman and one Joseph G. Armstrong, who I'll bet is the old boy's grandson although I didn't ask him. With actors thus arrang'd, the show went off without a hitch. Outside, the antient burying ground and the grateful Wren steeple; within, the glittering cross and traditional vestments of the priest—colourful legacies of OLD ENGLAND'S gentle legendry and ceremonial expression. The full service was read; and in the aesthetically histrionick spirit of one to whom elder custom, however intellectually empty, is sacred, I went through the various motions with a stately assurance which had the stamp of antiquarian appreciation if not of pious sanctity. Your Grandma, needless to say, did the same—and with an additional grace. Then fees, thanks, congratulations, inspections of Colonial pictures in Father Cox's study, and farewells! Two are one. Another bears the name of Lovecraft. A new household is founded!

We had intended to depart for Philadelphia at once, but the fatigue of the preceding heavy programme prompted us to defer this melilunar pilgrimage till the morrow. Tuesday afternoon, after changing the name card in the door of Parkside and notifying the tradesman of the new cognomen, we did get started for the Quaker City; leaving from the magnificently ROMAN Penn. Station. Of the details of this trip I shall presently speak in travelogical form. Just now I will simply outline the salient itinerary. Arriving at the Broad Street station about six p. m., we stopt at the Robert Morris Hotel— a new but reasonable hostelry which performs the marvel of harmoniously combining a Gothick

exterior with a Colonial interior. Signing the register "Mr. and Mrs." was quite easy despite total inexperience! Being obliged to get that damned Houdini manuscript done instanter, we finished the evening at the only publick stenographer's office in town which was then open—that at the Hotel Vendig, where for a dollar we obtain'd the use of a Royal machine for three hours. Grandma dictated whilst Grandpa typed—a marvellous way of speeding up copying, and one which I shall frequently employ in future, since my spouse expresses a willingness amounting to eagerness so far as her share of the toil is concern'd. She has the absolutely unique gift of being able to decipher the careless scrawl of my rough manuscripts—no matter how cryptically and involvedly interlined!

The next day we "saw Philadelphia right" by rubberneck bus—folder and views enclosed. That evening we had to do typing again at the Vendig—truly, a most practical and industrious honeymoon—and at length we drifted back to N. Y. with the finish'd manuscript, which was shot off to Henneberger amidst the milder diversions of ordering announcement cards at Dutton's, and all that sort of thing. Thenceforward, placid domesticity . . . punctuated by fraternal correspondence with Houdini, who liked the story and wants me to call on him at his home, 278 West 113th Street, and with Henneberger, whose latest missive has aroused vast excitement in this serene and new founded household. This honest but uncouth worthy Henny writes that he is making a radical change in the policy of *Weird Tales*, and that he has in mind a brand new magazine to cover the field of Poe-Machen shudders. This magazine, he says, will be "right in my line", and he wants to know if I would consider moving to CHICAGO to edit it! O gawd, O Montreal! IT may be a flivver, but your Grandma is urging me to take it up if it definitely materialises and is accompanied by the requisite guarantees. This I can hardly contemplate without a shiver—think of the tragedy of such a move for an aged antiquarian just settled down in enjoyment of the reliques of venerable New-Amsterdam! S. H. wouldn't mind living in Chicago at all—but it is Colonial atmosphere which supplies my very breath of life. I would not consider such a move, big though the proposition would be if genuine, without previously exhausting every sort of rhetorick in an effort to persuade Henneberger to let me edit at long distance. One trouble is, that the damned thing might fail after a few issues, leaving me stranded in uncongenial Western scenes . . . you can bet your Grandpa'll look sharply into anything of the sort before contemplating it seriously! But it may be all hot air anyway. I shall see Henneberger soon, for he means to visit N. Y. And he SAYS (GLORIOUS REALITY! Mail just came, and in it the cheque . . . . . for another HUNDRED fish!) he is sending me a cheque this week for the Houdini thing. This story may appear without my name, for Henny is so dull that he doesn't see how a collaborated work can be written in the first person—he expected third, and indulged in bitterly saline tears because I didn't write it thus. By the way—just to shew you how seriously he took the matter—he made a special trip from Chicago to Murfreesboro, Tennessee to consult Houdini about it! Hectic days, Sonny!

. . . . . I, myself, will not weary myself by disputing the relative position of Machen as compar'd with Yeats or Conrad. I know I like him better, because he does not bother with ponderous profundities which in the end have no meaning at all. Of course, he places form above matter—because it belongs above! In this futile, chaotick universe, it is supremely silly to fancy that anything matters more than those agreeable impressions which result from beautiful expression in any of the arts—including the art of life. Not that I swallow Machen whole—all of the defects you catalogue I recognise in one degree or another. But he certainly has a grasp of the principle of pure and sublimated horror which he shares with no man living, and perhaps with no man who has ever lived. His style I positively dislike—which shews you how impartial and uninfluenced by personal regard my entire judgment is. . . .

Your slum travelogue interested me vastly, and I hope you will take me to this hideous cesspool some day soon. Whether I have ever beheld any place of equal putrefaction remains to be seen—at present I find it hard to conceive of anything more utterly and ultimately loathsome than certain streets of the *lower* East Side where Kleiner took Loveman and me in April 1922. The organic things—Italo-Semitico-Mongoloid—inhabiting that awful cesspool could not by any stretch of the imagination be call'd human. They were monstrous and nebulous adumbrations of the pithecanthropoid and amoebal; vaguely moulded from some stinking viscous slime of earth's corruption, and slithering and oozing in and on the filthy streets or in and out of windows and doorways in a fashion suggestive of nothing but infesting worms or

deep-sea unnamabilities. They—or the degenerate gelatinous fermentation of which they were composed—seem'd to ooze, seep and trickle thro' the gaping cracks in the horrible houses . . . and I thought of some avenue of Cyclopean and unwholesome vats, crammed to the vomiting-point with gangrenous vileness, and about to burst and inundate the world in one leprous cataclysm of semi-fluid rottenness. From that nightmare of perverse infection I could not carry away the memory of any living face. The individually grotesque was lost in the collectively devastating; which left on the eye only the broad, phantasmal lineaments of the morbid soul of disintegration and decay . . . a yellow leering mask with sour, sticky, acid ichors oozing at eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and abnormally bubbling from monstrous and unbelievable sores at every point. . . .

. . . . . Whitman had genius, but repels me utterly. He was affected, conceited, artificial, inartistic, philosophically puerile, and fundamentally coarse . . . you can bet that the one Philadelphian point which I did not visit was the Whitman shrine in Camden N. J. across the river—where Wilde daintily tiptoed one day in the eighties to see the squalid fellow-poseur of whom he had heard so much. I can forgive Wilde's posing, because he created beauty in spite of it; but Walt——!!!!!! There's one point where I'd tend to disagree with you, and that is where you say that all forces in the cosmos are *bent upon* the destruction of all that is beautiful and fine. To me, this sounds just as unphilosophically teleological as Mortonius' opposite theory; since there is no reason in fact to believe the cosmos and its forces anything but utterly indifferent to all that appears, be it good or bad according to any particular local standard. The values of mankind regarding "beauty" and "fineness" mean absolutely nothing to the blind gods of the ultimate abyss, to whom all things are alike; and those gods, in their brainless, sightless grinding of the eternal mill may sometimes accidentally favour and sometimes accidentally frustrate what we locally, arbitrarily, and accidentally happen to esteem as beauty and fineness. The one really significant fact about the cosmos is its fundamental absence of purpose or direction . . . an absence which removes for the realistic analyst the illusions of right, wrong, justice, injustice, and so forth. There is no such thing as beauty—there is no such thing as fineness. The gods are neither for nor against us, for they do not know what we want, or even that we exist. All is chaos and chance, and a man's success or defeat means nothing except that his inclinations may or may not happen to coincide with the inevitable events with which an unconscious universe automatically and meaninglessly chances to surround him. You are right only to this extent—that the desires of man are generally pretty widely at variance with his ineluctable environment. Nobody is to blame for this, and it could not possibly be otherwise, but it usually happens to be so. Recognition of this natural condition forms a legitimate philosophical pessimism, but the moment a thinker becomes *bitter* about it he makes an ass of himself; for to be bitter is to attribute intent and personality to the formless, infinite, unchanging, and unchangeable void. We drift on a chartless, resistless sea. Let us sing when we can, and forget the rest. . . . . .

Yr. obt. ancestor,
H P

173. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
March 30, 1924

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . And here are a few notes on odd sundries . . . things that it has recently occurred to me to include in the catalogue of necessary articles. A yardstick, if there is one; all the soft collars in my bureau drawer; my pole and clothes hangers from my clothespress; my brown felt hat, my old straw hat, and my brand new straw hat as carefully packed away; all my overcoats, new grey summer suit, old oxford winter suit, best thin alpaca coat, summer wrap, bedroom shoes, bath sandals; all blankets and bedding, especially the ancestrally woven blankets . . . but I guess you know all of this anyway!

Proceeding to answer your questions and consider your suggestions—yes, we'd like a few pots and pans, and I *do* want my room clock besides the old red parlour clock. The double bed mattress here is 74 by 53 inches in size, and we would appreciate anything in the mattress line which may conform to these dimensions. All china and silver will be eminently acceptable. No—I don't believe the musician busts or Barye lions are distinctive enough for a Colonial household; but be sure to send the little paperweight lion you gave me, which is genuine-

ly piquant and artistic and not in the least hackneyed. Yes—all lace curtains and kindred objects will be highly in order. And I trust the Putney establishment will make favourable terms anent barometer and smaller telescope. The large telescope I must have.

I am not, I assure you, insensible of the trouble and strain of packing at your end—or of the disconcerting ordeal of unpacking at my end! The truck plan seems ideal to me, though A. E. P. G. finds the quoted rate rather high as compared with that quoted by a Boston firm for moving her friend's goods from Boston to Hohokus, N. J.

One thing just occurred to us—yesterday afternoon A. E. P. G. and I did some shopping around here, and found that our beloved Hershey's chocolate buds cost seventy or seventy-five cents per pound in this locality, whereas they are only about forty-nine or fifty at Gibson's in Providence! Now if you are going down town before the final assembling of the load, you might slip in a pound or two of these pleasing commodities at their Rhode Island price, which would certainly effect a most welcome saving on a highly desirable article!

. . . . . Last Tuesday I attended the Writers' Club, where I heard an exceedingly acute address on Shakespeare by the celebrated Will Irwin, who had enough new material to teach something to even the most erudite of his hearers. As casual anecdote I may remark that at the general breaking-up it was my fortune to be helped on with my overcoat by none other than the distinguished speaker himself . . . to whom, however, I refrained from offering a tip!

. . . . .

I had a piquant note from Eddy today, and must answer it soon. My correspondence and amateur work, however, have had to be greatly neglected on account of this rush order for three chapters of a book of American superstition. Miss Tucker probably failed to realise the vast amount of preliminary reading necessary to approach such a theme with even a shadow of the adequate background—but I am determined to try my best. It is, of course, essentially a gamble; for no one can tell whether a publisher will want it till after the three trial chapters are done; but on the whole I think the magnitude of the stakes justifies the hazard. Besides—now that I am started I really want to write the thing for its own sake!

Yr. most aff: nephew and obt: Servt:
H. P. L.

174. TO JAMES F. MORTON

259 Parkside Avenue
May 6, 1924

Cheerio!

. . . . . It all depends on the ball-and-chain. If she feels equal to a wild night, we'll show up at The Writers. But if she doesn't, I'm afeard I'll have to be listed among those absent. She generally has to hit the hay early, and I have to get home in proportionate time, since she can't get to sleep till I do. Otherwise, I keep her awake waiting, and she feels like hell the next day. Alas for the old days of Aug.-Sept.-Octr. 1922, when as a mere guest I could stay out as late as I damn pleased, and she never knew when I came back—or whether I came back at all, at all! However—I think I can get her used to my being out *one* night a week—the night of The Boys. . . .

Well, ta. ta!
Θεοβάλδος
TheobaldVs

175. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
August 1, 1924

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

I trust that my occasional cards have helped to dispel the impression which my extended epistolarly silence may have created, that Grandpa Theobald is altogether dead and buried! Truth to tell, the death and burial are only partial, and occasioned by the bustle and strain of the industrial quest which tense finances have served to accelerate. The non-materialisation of sundry literary prospects, coupled with the somewhat disastrous collapse of S. H.'s independent millinery venture, has created something of a shortage in the exchequer; so that it seemed advisable

for me to investigate whatever commercial prospects of any kind might offer themselves—but the results thereof to date have been conspicuously negative. Positions of every kind seem virtually unattainable to persons without experience, and the enclosed matter—representing only part of the total attempts made—tells the tale of a quest which has so far failed to pay for the ink and shoe-leather consumed. What came nearest to materialisation was the Newark venture—whose interesting amplitude has led me to devote a separate envelope to it. As you will note, it began by my answering an attractive advertisement and receiving an attractive reply. I telephoned to Newark immediately upon receiving the first Ott letter, and made an appointment for the next day—Wednesday, July 23. The opening proved to be for canvassing salesmen to introduce the service of the Creditors' National Clearing House, a Boston firm with a Newark branch, whose specialty (vide enclosed sales approach as revised by me) is the collection of slightly overdue accounts before they develope into bad debts. The sales manager, Mr. Ott, seemed to welcome my affiliation; and although there was no salary—only a commission on sales, with a prospect of a permanent district position if a certain amount of business was done in three months—I decided to give the thing a trial . . . especially since all other positions seemed unattainable. Accordingly I took home contracts, application for bond, and the like, and the next day returned to Newark, where I presented the filled-out blanks and received a briefcase full of selling material which I was to study before reporting for final details at a salesmen's meeting Satuday morning. The situation, on investigation, seemed clear; so much so that I revised the main line of approach (vide enclosed) in order to marshal the facts effectively. On Saturday the 26th I attended the salesmen's meeting, absorbed points from veteran salesmen, and was introduced to the head of the Newark branch, a crude but well-meaning fellow named William J. Bristol, who seems to display traces of a Levantine heritage. My revised version of the "selling talk" created somthing of a sensation in a mild way, and I had the satisfaction of hearing myself mentioned at the meeting—when Mr. Ott announced to the assembled multitude that my text was to be adopted thereafter as the regular sales formula of the house! But the actual struggle began on Monday, when I set out to canvass among wholesalers whose names, as per Ott's suggestion, I had culled from a telephone business directory. One of the enclosed documents—the

rough draft of my day's report to Ott—tells the salient features of this fruitless and exhausting day. Much energy spent, but nothing gained. By the time fatigue supervened to cut the labour short, I had reached a pretty definite opinion that I lack the magnetism, or brass, or whatever wizardry it may be, which forms the essential part of an effective canvasser. But, having been told by a veteran that retailers are easier than wholesalers, I returned to the fray on Wednesday, after my joints and muscles had progressed somewhat on the road to regained normalcy. This time I covered the main business district of Brooklyn, but with results scarcely better than before. The dealers were more courteous, but not a whit more inclined to discussion. Only two—an optician and a tailor—cared so much as to hear the distinctive features of the collection service or to have printed matter left with them. Obviously, I was not progressing very rapidly toward the nonchalant and insolent successfulness of the born canvasser! On Thursday—yesterday—I (together with one other novice, a dashing and prepossessing young ex-officer in the A. E. F. named Edward Hutchings) had an appointment to meet the head of the branch in Manhattan, and to be taken around on a specimen canvassing tour with an expert, so that subtle points of experienced salesmanship might be picked up. The meeting-point was the Fulton St. entrance of the Hudson Tubes (about which A. E. P. G. can tell you), and Hutchings and I were promptly on hand at the designated hour—nine-thirty a. m. He had had slightly better success than I, but was very dissatisfied with his progress and initimated the likelihood of his early resignation. Our conferee—Bristol and a breezy veteran salesman named De Kay—were over half an hour late; but treated us to a free open car ride up Broadway to the New York sub-branch—the office of a Mr. D. Costa, who takes orders from the Newark territorial headquarters. There many details were discussed, but the "roughneck" nature of the proposition became more and more evident—especially since it developed that most successful canvassing lies among the so-called "needle trades"—i. e., garment industries which are almost wholly in the hands of the most impossible sort of persons. The party then split for the specimen tours; De Kay taking Hutchings and Bristol taking me. I had not walked far when my guide became very candid about the tone of the business, and admitted that a gentleman born and bred has very little chance for success in such lines of canvassing salesmanship . . . where one must either be miraculously

magnetic and captivating, or else so boorish and callous that he can transcend every rule of tasteful conduct and push conversation on bored, hostile, and unwilling victims. I will own that I was marvellously relieved to be able to resign my arduous burthen without serving the week's notice which had been stipulated in the contract—and I was still further pleased at the deference and cordiality which honest Bristol displayed. For no sooner was the canvassing proposition out of the way, than he began to tell me something of his future plans, and to intimate that he may be able to co-operate with me quite extensively some time in revisory and other ways. He is (though he asked me not to mention it) dissatisfied with his present managership, and anxious to re-enter the insurance business, where his main experience lies. When he does that, he said, he may be able to offer me some proposition of really feasible nature; for in such a case he would need the assistance of a gentleman . . . his own crudity being painfully in his consciousness, and forming in his opinion a serious handicap to his success in higher lines of commercial endeavour. As a beginning, he is having me revise (or rather, write completely from oral hints) a letter of application for a general agency or district managership, which he means to send in duplicate to all the principal insurance companies of the country. With this approach in faultless rhetoric, he relies on his practical knowledge of the business to plead his cause after he has secured an audience with whatever powers may be. Here's wishing him success—his plight is a bit pathetic, taking into account the ceaseless struggle between unlimited ambition and a crudity of which he does not share David V. Bush's idyllic unconsciousness. He wants to improve his speech and oratory as well as his written style—but for this I have referred him to a better authority than myself—none other than good old Morton, who is a graduate and former instructor of the Curry School of Expression in Boston. Heigho—it's a great life! I enclose the application letter I have prepared for Bristol. No use—if I have any forte, it's in the line of writing and revision. The best sort of position I'll ever get is one which employs my pen—and I trust in Time and the Gods to put such an opening in my path!

. . . . . Meanwhile my economy is something to admire . . . if I do say it myself! I never spent so little in my life before, and am soundly laying the foundations of a strong and miserly character. When I do get gold, I shall be like Old Gaspard in the Chimes of Normandy, and keep it in

leathern bags to take out now and then for admiration; letting it clink through my fingers and through my unkempt hair . . . if I have any of the latter left. Better be sure to keep me supplied with that hair tonic, lest I have to spin my future doubloons and pieces of eight on a glabrous and reluctant hemisphere! But avaunt, dull care! Let me drown my worries in watered ink, or the clatter of Remington keys. . . .

Ah, yes—it's about time for the diary now. I believe my last previous instalment was to A. E. P. G., and covered June the 30th, on which date the final furniture instalment arrived. Well, the sun rose quite as usual on the following day, apparently unmoved by the sudden augmentation of Flatbush's ligneous wealth. At noon both S. H. and I went over to 'Little-Sonny's for lunch; and in the afternoon the ladies confabulated indoors whilst Sonny and his Grandpa strolled on Riverside Drive, and later stopped on a settee to read Wilde's *The Critic as Artist*. As A. E. P. G. can tell you, there's a delightful and many-path'd park on the steep side-hill betwixt Riverside Drive and the adjacent railway tracks and shore. Were it not for the human herds who waddle through it, it would be one of the choicest spots—or rather strips—on this terraqueous globe. On the following day—July 2nd—S. H. and I went down town on one of the last of our bonnet-bearing expeditions; incidentally meeting Kleiner quite by chance in 40th Street. . . . The next day—the so-called glorious fourth of the Yankee rebels—S. H. and I devoted to open-air reading in Prospect Park. We have discovered a delightfully unfrequented rock overhanging a lake not far from our own door; and there we while away many an hour in the pages of chosen friends from our well-stocked shelves. On this occasion my book was *Marius the Epicurean*, and hers was your old acquaintance *The Conqueror*, by Gertrude Atherton. So great an impression did the latter volume produce, that upon our next trip down town we visited the impressive pyramidal tomb of Alexander Hamilton in Trinity Churchyard! Saturday, the fifth, this reading programme was repeated; and on Sunday we spent most of the day answering the help wanted advertisements in the Sunday papers. Monday the seventh, we dedicated to pleasure and travel—that is, after one business interview—meeting at Trinity about noon, paying our respects to Hamilton's grave, visiting the fine Colonial town house of President James Monroe (of Monroe Doctrine fame), which is now sunk in slum degradation and imperilled by new building plans (see enclosed picture), threading some Colonial alleys in Green-

wich-Village, and finally taking the omnibus at Washington Square and riding all the way up to Fort George, where we descended the steep hill to Dyckman Street, took lunch in a humble restaurant, (that had a fascinating whitish kitten) and proceeded to the ferry. Here embarking, we crossed the spacious Hudson to the foot of the Palisades; changing to an omnibus which climbed the precipitous slope by a zigzag road arrangement affording some magnificent views, and which finally turned inland through a forest road lined with fine estates and terminating at the quaint and sleepy village of Englewood, N.J., which A. E. P. G. can describe to you. After that we rode down to Fort Lee (opposite 125th St.) by trolley, crossed on the ferry, and rode all the way home by various changes of open surface car. It was a great day, and gave us some fine sunset glimpses of the Woolworth and Municipal buildings as we changed cars at the Brooklyn Bridge on the homeward trip.

. . . . . Sunday the thirteenth was another advertisement-answering day —ugh!—and on the morrow I tried some personal replies to notices calling for such. It was a weary and detestable tramp—door to door, refusal to refusal—and by evening I was ready to change the subject, notwithstanding that I had managed to work in quite a little artistic and antiquarian sightseeing. I walked up Madison Avenue, where the choicest emporia of the rare and beautiful hold forth, and in great windows lost myself amidst antique vases and clocks, ship models and miniatures, and classically carven desks whereon have rested quill pens and lace-ruffled wrists. Then, too, I revisited the narrow and twisting Colonial sections of lower Manhattan, and spacious Sutton Place, up near the piers of the Queensboro Bridge, where wealth and taste have reclaimed one short section of dingy Avenue A, making it into a paradise of Georgian gardens and Londonesque facades, with quaint terraces overlooking the East River that rushes far below. A. E. P. G. will know the locality approximately if you tell her that it is within about three blocks of the Jane Teller Mansion which she and I visited—in 61st St. Another thing I visited that day was Chinatown—Mott and Doyer Sts., branching off from sordid Chatham Square. This I had seen after dark two years ago with Kleiner and Loveman; but I now beheld it for the first time by day. There are some interesting Oriental balconies, carved and gilded, but so few that one's expectations are invariably disappointed. Whilst I was absent Small Sonny called up to tell his Grandpa he was leaving for Maine. Tuesday came more local walking and house-inspecting—including a

jaunt through green, shady ways in western Flatbush which remind one infinitely of such Providence sections as Cooke St. In the evening I did some Bush work—a sudden job to be included in a coming book. On Wednesday I took my Bush work along—together with the *Kasidah* of Sir Richard Burton—for a day of hard work in the open. First accompanying S. H. to a business appointment which after all yielded nothing, I next proceeded to show her some of the sights I had myself seen on the previous Monday; including Madison Avenue and Sutton Place. Then depositing her on a homeward car, I took David V. and Sir Richard on foot to Central Park, where I spent all the afternoon wandering in green ways or sitting on rocks beneath rural shade: reading and revising, revising and reading. By evening I had worked up to the northern boundary, and had scaled the height whereon stands the old 1812 blockhouse. In returning I crossed into Morningside Park, scaled the heights beside the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and emerged on the Columbia campus; taking the homeward train at Broadway and 116th St. . . . In the late afternoon we had a call from a Mr. Bailey, connected with the Homeland Co. who sold us the Bryn Mawr land, and discussed with him the type of house we would wish if we ever got that far out of the morass of fiscal peril. . . . Friday was a home day—spent largely in studying the preliminary part of my ill-starred mercantile venture. Saturday I attended the salesmen's meeting in Newark, later coming home and becoming properly transfixed with astonishment on receiving a telephone call from one whom I had fancied far away in Ovidian exile at the Tomi of Belgrade Lakes—LITTLE BELKNAP HIM-SELF! It seems that his mother, whose health is nearly as uncertain as his own had been taken ill in Maine; developing a high fever and seeming in general so upset that a return to New York was the only safe thing to plan. The return had benefited her, and she was now steadily recovering, but Belknap's nerves were still shaken with the strain of the sudden perturbation. As it happened, I had large news to impart to him . . . not only Kleiner's accident, about which he was properly sympathetic, but the coming advent to New York—perhaps within three weeks—of that arch-poet and aesthete, destined at once to step to the supremacy of our circle—SAMUEL LOVEMAN! Most of Loveman's friends, including George Kirk, Hart Crane, and Gordon Hatfield, are already in the metropolis; and he now means to follow—fortified by the virtual certainty of the literary success and recognition for which he

has so long striven. His book on the late Edgar Saltus is about to be professionally published, and Saltus' widow is anxious to meet him and aid him in establishing himself as a standard literary figure. . . .

I am ever Yr. most aff: Nephew & Obt. Sert.,
H. P. L.

176. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside-Avenue
Brookland-Parish
Province of New-York
20th August, 1724

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . Friday and Saturday were solid home days—except that on Saturday evening S. H. and I went to the cinema—The Linden—and saw an indifferent melodrama entitled *The Woman on the Jury*. Sunday we answered advertisements and hoped for the best, but Monday we decided to have some fun whilst life might last, so went to the American Museum of Natural History. . . . After the museum, we took an 8th Ave. surface car down town, and dined in Italian style at the Milan restaurant in 42nd St. The spaghetti there is excellent, though I insist that S. H. herself can prepare a brand still more magical in its subtle appeal. After dinner, home. On Tuesday—yesterday—we continued our pleasure-seeking, interrupted only by the industrial recesses mentioned on the first page of this document. This time our programme was antiquarian, and we commenced at Fraunces' Tavern, (open'd in 1762 as The Queen's Head) an antient hostelry famed as the scene of General Washington's farewell to his officers in 1783. As when A. E. P. G. and I visited it in 1922, the door was open'd for us with great ceremony by a servitor in periwig and small-cloaths; and we at once proceeded to the oak-panell'd dining hall, where under the beaming eye of our protray'd host (for Saml. Fraunces' painting hangs over the mantelpiece) and in sight of a magnificient white Colonial archway in the corridor adjacent, we partook of a good repast (S. H. fried clams, H. P. spaghetti) in an atmosphere redolent of greater and earlier dinners—General Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Esq., Nathaniel Greene of Rhode-Island, and the like . . . all of whom I cou'd clearly discern in spirit, with gleaming silver buckles and periwigs new-powder'd. . . . On the same evening, at six o'clock, our expedition arriv'd at old Greenwich-Village. . . . On the corner of Washington-Square and McDougall-Street, in the iron-fenc'd yard of a colonial mansion, we beheld a fine plump black-and-white cat. A moment later another appear'd—this one jet black, like my old Nigger-man. In two more moments a prepossessing tiger join'd the company; and by the time I had stoop'd to stroke the haughty blackamoor, no less than six or seven had assembled; some friendly, some indifferent, and some frankly curious. It was a feline convention; and, Khatist that I am, I made the most of it in purring and intelligent conversation. In vain did my spouse seek to set me in motion . . . should not an old tomcat occasionally pause to chat with the furry cronies of his youth? Finally, though, when I had sighted another cat—a black and yellow aristocrat perched on the outside of an ancient small-paned window—and was about to begin a fresh discussion with him, S. H. dragg'd me away by main force; checking resistance by pointing to counter-attractions ahead . . . Colonial gables and distant Georgian chimney-pots in West Fourth Street. . . .

With every sort of regards from both, and with the hope of an early reply, I am Yr. Most aff: Nphew and obt. Servt.

H. P. L.

177. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.
September 29, 1924
Finish'd Tuesday, Sept. 30

My dear Daughter Lillian:—

. . . . . The next day, August 21, was likewise spent at home with pen in hand; but in the evening something started which indeed merits ample record! The Boys met at Kirk's, and a royal good time was had by all. Leeds brought a copy of that *Little Old New York* book—the first I had seen—and the talk ran much on antiquarian matters. At one-

thirty a. m. the meeting broke up, and we all started out—including our genial host, who resolved to walk as far as the farthest-walking of his guests. We dropped Morton and McNeil at the 104th Street elevated station, (Belknap being in Atlantic City) and Kleiner at the 103d Street subway kiosk. This left Leeds, Kirk, and Grandpa Theobald as the surviving pedestrians. Down Broadway we walked, admiring the architecture and planning explorations. At Columbus Circle we turned into 8th Avenue, obtaining at an all-night orangeade booth the bottles of Private Stock which I later shipped to my daughters. Gay atmosphere! At 49th Street we dropped Leeds at his new hotel—the Ray—to which he had just moved from the Cort across the street. Then, cleared for action and with the evening yet young before us, Kirk and I resolved to "do" the Colonial town. Having a receptive audience, I proposed to show off the local Georgian antiquities as they should be shown! We continued down Eighth Avenue with an air of expectancy. Hitherto we had encountered nothing colonial, since with rare exceptions all the town above Fourteenth Street dates from the nineteenth century or later. Around the twenties we saw an old house or two—survivors from the one-time Chelsea Village—but the "real stuff" burst upon us just below Fourteenth, where Eighth Avenue melts into ancient Hudson Street at a crossroads as quaint and old-world as that Soho view I am enclosing. This marks, of course, the entrance into Greenwich-Village; and is made still more interesting by the park-like triangular breathing space called Abingdon Square. Brick colonial houses were now numerous, and I pointed out to Kirk in the early morning stillness the characteristic features of the leading types of New York colonial doorways. From Hudson we turned into Grove, where some splendidly preserved colonial specimens occur; and from there we entered the grilled iron gate of Grove Court, (ask A. E. P. G. about it) a delicious eighteenth century byway where bits of garden and occasional restored doorways lend an atmosphere which only a poet could describe. It is out of the vulgar world, and part of the fabric of tranquil and lovely dream. The flowers were sweet in the stillness, and graceful grey cats lent a touch of mingled beauty and eeriness. Thence we repaired to Gay Street (see former letter), whose curving unworldliness captivated Kirk, and afterward we crossed to Patchin and Milligan Places, and the nameless inner place of which I have already told you. If these ancient spots were fascinating in the busy hours

of twilight, fancy their utter and poignant charm in the sinister hours before dawn, when only cats, criminals, astronomers, and poetic antiquarians roam the waking world! Kirk went into raptures, seeing them for the first time; and I, though I had seen them before, was not far behind him in enthusiasm. Truly, we had cast the modern and visible world aside, and were sporting through the centuries with the spirit of timeless antiquity! From this section—the "Jefferson Market" section of Greenwich Village,— we proceeded to that congeries of lanes known as the "Minettas", (see my long letter of last March) where night brought a thousand charms I had never anticipated. All the Italian squalor was faded into shadow, and I could fancy spotless periwigs and sedan chairs under the wan, waning half moon that struggled above the lines of antique gables. We explored some cryptical inner courts which I had never seen before, and where black recesses and bits of archaic moonlit wall formed pictures worthy of any etcher. From these we sought the broad colonial expanse of Varick Street, where endless rows of eighteenth century dormer windows and occasional gambrel roofs give an unrivalled mass picture of the New York known to Hamilton and Washington. At a small restaurant we stopped for a cup of coffee—it was near dawn now, but our spirits were yet fresh! The street lamps were still burning when we turned into ancient Charlton Street—best preserved of all the colonial thoroughfares, where spotless paint and gleaming knockers suggest the neat prosperity as well as the artistic inclinations of the Georgian householders. More raptures—and the dawn was grey when we entered Prince Street, crossed Broadway, and paused at the pitifully decrepit house where James Monroe died. This, one might fancy, was enough for any trip; but the fever of the explorer was upon us, so forgetting the hour we turned south toward the Brooklyn Bridge section, alternating between Mott and Mulberry Streets in order to observe as many ancient houses as possible. This section was farm land in colonial times, so that all the old houses are farmhouses—crowded amidst the unending brick squalor of a populous slum. At Chatham Square we saw the ancient cemetery, and presently turned toward the picturesque antiquities of Batavia and Cherry Streets. In the latter narrow hilly way we found many wonders, including a marvellous hidden court where burns a venerable diamond-shaped lamp—the only one I have seen in New York except the one in Milligan Place. Later ascending to Franklin Square, we passed

under the piers of Brooklyn Bridge, observing the old sugar-house where rebel prisoners were confined from 1776 to 1783, (original house torn down, but one of the windows incorporated into the new building) and discovering a magnificient colonial section around Vandewater and New Chambers Streets—where gambrel roofs, curving iron railings, and all the appurtenances of the past abound. We now went down Pearl Street to Hanover Square and Fraunces' Tavern, incidentally drinking in the colonial houses and cross-street waterfront vistas which loomed along the way. After that we crossed Broadway to the west waterfront, noting the venerable edifices on every hand, and remarking especially the Planters' Hotel—the colonial building which Poe inhabited in its seedy old age—and Tom's Chop House, which has been open continuously since 1797. Of course we meditated in Trinity and St. Paul's churchyards, and admired the Georgian beauty of St. Paul's—both facade and steeple. Then, as a climax, we approached the City Hall (1812); whose classic beauty is immortal. The rosy dawn had broken whilst we were on Pearl Street, gilding the steeples of the Brooklyn shore across the glittering water. By the time we reached the city hall it was bright morning, and we gazed at the sun-splendid pinnacles of the Woolworth Building as seen through the arch of the Municipal building. This was the culmination. Glancing at the fine unfinished courthouse whose classic lines are apparently going to be spoilt by some tawdry addition above the pediment, we sought our respective home stations— parting at a little before eight by St. Paul's colonial clock. I reached 259 shortly before nine, went out to buy some groceries, and retired in expectancy of the evenings's trip to colonial Sheridan Square to see O'Neill's play *All God's Chillun*. This, of course, was Friday the 22nd. I awaked in time to accompany S. H. to the theatre, and we arrived so early that we had time for an antiquarian stroll around Patchin and Milligan Places. The play, which deals with the marriage of a low Irish girl to an educated negro, went off very smoothly and capably—save that the mayor had forbidden the performance of the first act, which involved the participation of small children and the use by them of low language. This act was read from the stage by the director, who interspersed many appropriately sarcastic remarks of his own, reflecting on the intelligence of mayors and other annoyances. It seems that this ban has continued, since the act was still omitted when Belknap saw the play a month late. O'Neill is surely a great

dramatist—perhaps the only American dramatist of note now living. The tragic symbolism of the theme in this play is admirably enhanced by such devices as the street songs of different periods, and by the prominence given to a Congo mask—one of the few primitive expressions of art which the negro has achieved. (These masks, by the way, are becoming quite the rage among the ultra-moderns, who are copying their technique in certain pictorial and sculptural works of their own.) The play let out early, and we were home before midnight.

* * * * *

. . . . . In the evening there called, accompanied by his wife, the Rev. George T. Baker, round-collar'd rector of St. Gabriel's Church, who betwixt genial smiles and puffs of unending cigars made an offer for the piano which S. H. advertised for sale the day before. We let him have it for three hundred fifty dollars. Next morning he called for it with a dray—on which he and I rode back to his house (quite near here), where he wrote me a cheque and a letter of identification at his bank. I then went to the bank at Church and Flatbush Avenues, got the cash, paid the grocer with forty-eight dollars of it, and returned with the residue. . . .

. . . . . Sunday the 7th—I had a call from Henneberger, who was here on another business trip. Going over to his hotel, I had quite a talk with him; during which he told me of the new lease of life achieved by *Weird Tales*, and of the fine job he had in store for me.

. . . . . Wednesday I started the day with another fruitless business interview—with that electric company at the foot of 80th Street.

On Thursday I did some reading, and in the afternoon took charge of Lovemen for a sightseeing trip. We visited a Brooklyn cluster of book and antique shops, obtained the magnificent view from Fort Greene Park, studied Brooklyn's colonial waterfront, and viewed the atistocratic street on the heights above the East River—Columbia Heights—where Loveman was to room across the hall from his old Cleveland friend Hart Crane—an egotistical young aesthete who has obtained some real recognition in *The Dial* and other modernist organs, and who has an unfortunate predilection for the wine when it is red. Columbia Heights—which you will find mentioned in the accompanying Pennell article—is one of the most delightful spots I have ever seen—with its harbour view, its quiet, and its little parklike spaces

overlooking the water, where crystal fountains splash and odd flowers bloom amidst the greensward. From there we went to the always lovely Japanese garden near the Brooklyn Museum, and thence to 259 through Prospect Park. Here we had dinner, after which we started off to Little Belknap's to pick him up on our way to the Boys' meeting at Kirk's. No one but Sonny and I knew that Loveman had arrived, so that our entry to the gathering was to be a surprise. The Longs were all overjoyed to see Samuelus again—even haughty Felis purred— and the cordiality of the surprised Boys, after we reached Kirk's, was positively uproarious. After a period of literary festivity—during which Mortonius read Loveman's greatest poem aloud—we all broke up; Samuelus coming home with me to sleep in the still unrented room before moving his things from his provisional hotel downtown to the Crane establishment. In the morning I bade Samuelus adieu, but soon followed him downtown to make a round of employment agencies. After a little of this, I started out on one of my lone explorations, having a mind to see Corlear's Hook—which though now immers'd in the maelstrom of East Side urban squalor, was in the eighteenth century a pleasing rural point of land, two miles from the town, where in a grove of elms and willows near the sea stood a restful old Dutch tavern which Washington Irving has immortalised in his tale of Wolfert Webber. . . .

. . . . . The next day opened inauspiciously, for S. H. had another stumble which aggravated her former sprain, and another doctor had to be called—this time the tried and true McChesney, who cured her of the great neuritis attack of 1922-3. At noon I went to see Henneberger, who promised great things, and insisted on presenting books broadcast to all the household. He wanted me, moreover, to accompany him to a horse race at Belmont Park; but a previous engagement saved me that boredom. This engagement began by meeting Loveman up at Sonny-Boy's, and was soon augmented by our triangular adjournment to Kirk's, where we found our host awaiting us in the company of Lazare, who was then rooming with him. Ere long Kleiner and Morton put in an appearance; and we finished the afternoon in an exceedingly festive manner. At six Sonny had to go home, and we all saw him to his door. Then the rest of us lunched at a place in Columbus Avenue, and started to walk down town, incidentally stopping at every bookstall we saw. . . . We now worked down to the waterfront and under the great piers of the Manhattan Bridge, intending

to prolong our excursion to Fraunces' Tavern and the western shore; but fatigue on Loveman's part—for he has been semi-ill with bronchial trouble ever since arriving here—caused us to cut the excursion short at Franklin square about three-thirty or four a. m. To retire so early was really a shame, but since we did not wish to continue without the guest of honour we grudgingly desisted and returned to our respective domiciles. Heigho! I bought a premature *Sunday Times* in Park Row, which saved my going out the next day. That day was one of gloom and nerves—more advertisement answering, which has become such a psychological strain that I almost fall unconscious over it!

Monday the 15th I went in vain to a publishing house whither I was sent by one of the agencies I had consulted, and later visited other agencies—with as little result. After that, to get the taste out of my mouth, I made another lone exploring trip; this time covering the entire length of colonial Hudson Street, where some marvellous houses and corners still lurk unimpaired. . . . On Tuesday S. L. called, and accompanied S. H. and me downtown, later leaving us to visit a bookstall. S. H. had a fruitless interview at the Saks shop, and we later attended to miscellaneous errands—bank, Scribner's (where I am trying to get cash in place of the credit entered for me by Henneberger), a furniture shop where we enviously admired a splendid Queen Anne dining suite, a silk shop, and finally a boot and shoe emporium where S. H. found some high shoes to relieve her sorely tried ankle. The rest of the day I read deMaupassant. The next day Henneberger called up on business—he wanted me to turn out some samples of my adapting of jokes for his proposed magazine. This job kept me busy the rest of the day, and at night I had quite a pile ready. On Thursday, at ten-thirty a. m., I called on Henneberger, and liking my samples enthusiastically he "hired" me on the spot as outlined on the post card I immediately sent you. . . .

The next day—Friday the 19th—I did some Henneberger work, and at four-thirty p. m. welcomed Loveman. He was feeling rather weak, however, so that he slept in the morris-chair most of the time, whilst I continued to work. After dinner he felt much better—perhaps due to the quinine which he purchased and took—and I accompanied him to his room in Columbia Heights, where I met the redoubtable Hart Crane, a little ruddier, a little puffier, and slightly more moustached than when I saw him in Cleveland two years ago. Crane, whatever his

limitations, is a thorough aesthete; and I had some enjoyable conversation with him. His room is in excellent taste, with a few paintings by William Sommer (that elderly eccentric whom I described when I visited Cleveland), a choice collection of modern books, and some splendid small objects d'art of which a carven Buddha and an exquisitely carved Chinese ivory box are the high spots. Loveman's room is at the other end of the hall, with an outlook over the East River and a stupendous panorama of the Manhattan skyline. I nearly swooned with aesthetic exaltation when I beheld the panorama—the evening scene with innumerable lights in the skyscrapers, shimmering reflections and bobbing ship lights on the water, and at the extreme left and right, the flaming Statue of Liberty and the scintillant arc of the Brooklyn Bridge, respectively. But even this was not exactly the climax. That came when we went out on the flat roof (Crane and Loveman are on the fourth and top story) and saw the thing in all its unlimited and unglassed magnificence. It was something mightier than the dreams of old-world legend—a constellation of infernal majesty—a poem in Babylonian fire! No wonder Dunsany waxed rhapsodic about it when he saw it for the first time . . . it is beyond the description of any but him! Added to the weird lights are the weird sounds of the port, where the traffick of all the world comes to a focus. Fog-horns, ships' bells, the creak of distant windlasses . . . visions of far shores of India, where bright-plumed birds are roused to song by the incense of strange garden-girt pagodas, and gaudy-robed camel-drivers barter before sandalwood taverns with deep-voiced sailors having the sea's mystery in their eyes. Silks and spices, curiously-wrought ornaments of Bengal gold, and gods and elephants strangely carven in jade and carnelian. Ah, me! Would that I could express the magick of the scene! Crane is writing a long poem on Brooklyn Bridge in a modern medium, which may some time be printed in the *Dial*. But such is which. The evening advanced, and I went home. The next day—Saturday the 20th—was illuminated by news of A. E. P. G.'s prospective advent. Samuelus and I met up at 'Ittle-Sonny's, and all three went on a grand tour of the bookstalls—this being the occasion when I picked up my Herodutus. Belknap picked up Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* for one dollar and fifty cents, which was adjudged the premier "find" of the afternoon. At six-thirty we dispersed, Samuelus coming here to dinner, after which he and I amused ourselves by mak-

ing drawings of each other—results herewith enclosed. On this day I received a letter from Houdini—who was playing at the Albee and stopping at the Crown—offering to assist me in finding a position on his return to New York. I had given Eddy a letter of introduction to him, and the two had had some very exhaustive discussions, during which the magician expressed much eagerness to be of assistance to us both. I enclose the letter—which I answered, and to which I have just received a reply, asking me to telephone Houdini next Sunday or Monday, when he will be here before leaving for a vaudeville tour of the Pacific Coast.

The next day—Sunday the 21st—I spent in desultory reading and excited anticipation of A. E. P. G. Loveman came to dinner, and went down to the Hudson Terminal with me when the guest of honour's telephone call came. You can imagine how delighted I was to welcome my daughter—whom Loveman and I jointly escorted to 259, and to whom the former presented a copy of some verses he had just written on his old Grandpa Theobald. I presume A. E. P. G. hath shown these lines to you, but I'll make you an individual copy for permanent preservation. After Samuelus' departure, all hands retired and slumbered the slumbers of the moderately equitable.

The next day—Monday the 22nd—I did some Hennebergian work, and in the afternoon fared forth with my daughter to the Long establishment, where Sonny and his mamma were very glad to see the amiable voyager. In the subway en route I did much Henneberger work on a small pad; thus sticking to my job despite my embarkation on ventures of pleasure. . . .

The next day A. E. P. G. met S. H. down town, whilst I took Samuelus to the Poe Cottage in Fordham. The old magick yet lingered about the spot, and gave Loveman that sense of rest and domesticity whose absence from modern New York disturbs him so gravely. . . . Loveman slept a little—he has the power to nod off into slumber at odd moments—and refreshed by this, fared downtown to meet Crane for a tour of literary centres. I went downtown also, making one of my lone tours of colonial exploration and looking up some of the quaint corners Coates had recommended to me. At eve I returned home, but finding to my dismay that I had forgotten to deliver a telephone memorandum to Samuelus, set out again at once for his abode in Columbia Heights—this time accompanied by my daughter Anne, to whom I wished to show the pleasing

sights of that locality. The trip was very pleasant, and though our hosts were not in, (I later learned that Crane had gotten hilariously drunk, and that Loveman had had to take him home amidst many an amusing incident) I took A. E. P. G. to the roof and displayed to her that superlative illuminated skyline which had so moved me on my former visit. . . .

Monday—the day I began this epistle but which has now become a yesterday—Henneberger called me up, and I had quite a talk with him at his hotel. He promises to pay me regularly after next Friday, and I can but hope that he will live up to his statement this time. The rest of the day—after a call at Scribner's—was spent in writing—a pursuit which has also engrossed this present Tuesday. I am fearsomely behindhand in my correspondence—as a peremptory letter from Eddy, with self-addressed envelope, is at this moment reminding me! Tell A. E. P. G. that I shall write her soon, and meanwhile pray let me hear from both you children. S. H. received your epistle, and will answer when possible. She is still at the place where she has been the last few weeks, but feels that the situation is insecure, and is looking sharply for something more solid and promising. Did I say that Houdini has written, promising to find something for me? Probably I did—but I might as well transcribe in toto the note I received yesterday. (Monday).

Sept. 28, 1924

My dear Lovecraft:—

Received your letter and will be back next Sunday and Monday, October 5 and 6, respectively, before I leave for the coast.

Give me a ring on my private 'phone, Cathedral 8260, by all means, as I want to put you in touch with someone worth-while. In the meantime I am already spreading propaganda.

With kindest regards,
Sincerely yours,
HOUDINI.

Keith's Phila. Week Sept. 29.

I subscribe myself ever Yr. most aff: nephew and obt: Servt: H. P. L.

178. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

259 Parkside Avenue
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Nov. 4-5, 1924
Finished Nov. 6

My very dear daughter Lillian:—

Can it be that an entire month and more hath pass'd since last I writ you? So saith the *Old Farmer's Almanack,* (of which I am monstrous eager to get the 1925 issue) and I am not dispos'd to contradict so venerable and reliable an authority; but I am confident that you will pardon me in view of the nerve-draining events mention'd in my letter to A. E. P. G.—the illness and hospital sojourn of my spouse, and the impending dissolution of this establishment in a maze of poverty and uncertainty. Of such is life—glorious life—compos'd—but being of haughty and imperial instincts, I will proceed to play blithely on the lyre whilst Rome burns.

* * * * *

This reminds me that I'd enormously like to see you here. There are myriad sights to show you, as A. E. P. G. can attest; and if your advent were haply to coincide with my domestic disintegration, I can assure you that your brain-power would be keenly appreciated—though I would not let you do any physical work of breaking-up after your summer ordeal of like nature and your vernal mishap to the back. After all, this place won't be a fraction as hard as 598 to disperse, since there are no vast attic accumulations.

* * * * *

The next day—Thursday the 9th—Belknap and I descended on Scribner's to use up that sixty-dollar credit of Henneberger's which I could not convert into cash. Sonny was there to help his Grandpa pick out good books, and I decided to choose one for him in partial repayment for the many dinners and courtesies I am receiving from his household. We secured a delightful clerk—a finely-bred young chap

with an incipient red moustache who discussed intelligently and literarily all the authors we mentioned—and with his aid set about our pleasing task. Some of the books were more expensive than I had anticipated, but even so I managed to gather up a very respectable "five-foot-shelf". The full list follows. Most of them came in two days, but those which Scribner's did not have in stock (here marked with an asterisk) were delayed till a week ago—Wednesday, Oct. 29th. You may easily see what a treat I have:

Books by Lord Dunsany
**The Queen of Elfland's Daughter*
**Fifty-One Tales*
Five Plays
Plays of Near and Far

Books by Arthur Machen
The House of Souls
The Hill of Dreams
Far-Off Things
Things Near and Far
The Secret Glory
The London Adventure
**Hieroglyphics*

Books on Colonial Material
The Architecture of Colonial America—Eberlein
Furniture of our Forefathers—Singleton
Early American Craftsmen—Dyer
Old New England Churches—Bacon
Old Boston Streets and Ways—Whitehill
Crooked and Narrow Streets of Old Boston—Thwing

Miscellaneous
**Episodes of Vathek*—Beckford
Rome of Today and Yesterday—Dennie

For Belknap (his own choice)
The Thing In the Woods (new horror novel)—Harper Williams

Some haul? I'd never have ventured such a plunge if it hadn't been the only way to get the value Henneberger owed me. But I'm glad of it for all that! . . .

Friday the 10th, in accordance with a plan of long standing which a chance editorial in the *Times* (enclosed) brought to fruition, I started out on a tour of exploration whose focus was the antient colonial city of Elizabethtown, (now call'd Elizabeth) in the Province of New-Jersey. . . . Night fell all too soon, but there was a great moon; and I continued my quest in the spectral night. Never will I forget the sunset as it came upon me that day—I was on a scarcely used part of the old Essex and Middlesex turnpike, a road yet unpaved, and lined with the great elms and tiny colonial cottages that General Washington knew. To the west stretched the open fields and the primeval forest, and down over that haunted expanse sank the great solar disc in a riot of flame and glamour, painting the sky with a thousand streamers of weird and unimagined wildness long after the glowing edge had vanished beneath the trees and the hills. . . .

. . . . . The Andrew Joline house, built in 1735, is wholly hidden from the street by shops, but stands in a spectral courtyard, with its back on the river bank. And on the northeast corner of Bridge Street and Elizabeth Avenue is a terrible old house—a hellish place where night-black deeds must have been done in the early seventeen-hundreds—with a blackish unpainted surface, unnaturally steep roof, and an outside flight of steps leading to the second story, suffocatingly embowered in a tangle of ivy so dense that one cannot but imagine it accursed or corpse-fed. It reminded me of the Babbitt house in Benefit Street, which as you recall made me write those lines entitled *The House* in 1920. Later its image came up again with renewed vividness, finally causing me to write a new horror story with its scene in Providence and with the Babbitt house as its basis. It is called *The Shunned House*, and I finished it last Sunday night.

* * * * *

The day after my second Elizabethan tour—Sunday the 12th—Loveman was here to dinner, and was greatly interested in my account of my travels. He will soon make a trip there himself, with Old Theobald as guide. After dinner we walked down to the Brooklyn Heights section to call on his friend Hart Crane in Columbia Heights, with whom he had stopped till he moved up to Kirk's in 106th Street, Manhattan. The walk was very lovely—downhill from the heights on which the Brooklyn Museum stands, and with many a sunset vista of old houses and far spires. We reached the heights in the deep twilight, when the

aerial skyline across the river had a charm peculiar to the hour—a perfect silhouette effect, since it was too dark for surface definition, yet too light to allow the contours to become merged into the black recesses of engulfing night. We found Crane in and sober—but boasting over the two-day spree he had just slept off, during which he had been picked up dead drunk from the street in Greenwich Village by the eminent modernist poet E. E. Cummings—whom he knows well—and put in a homeward taxi. Poor Crane! I hope he'll sober up with the years, for there's really good stuff and a bit of genius in him. He is a genuine poet of a sort, and his excellent taste is reflected in the choice objects d'art with which he has surrounded himself. I would give much for a certain Chinese ivory box of his, with panels exquisitely carved into delicate pastoral scenes in high relief—every detail of landscape and foliage standing out with that absolute beauty and naturally assured perfection for which the best Chinese art is distinguished. After some conversation we all went out for a scenic walk through the ancient narrow hill streets that wind about the Brooklyn shore. There is a dark charm in this decaying waterfront, and the culmination of our tour was the poor old Fulton Ferry, which we reached about nine o'clock, in the best season to enjoy the flaming arc of Brooklyn Bridge in conjunction with the constellation of Manhattan lights across the river, and the glimmering beacons of slow-moving shipping on the lapping tides. When I was last there—in 1922 with Kleiner—the old ferry was still running, and the pensive wooden statue of Robert Fulton was looking down on the scene of decline from his niche in the front of the floridly Victorian ferry-house. Now even these things are gone. The ferry made its last trip on the 19th last January, and the statue has vanished—presumably to adorn some museum—leaving a gapingly empty niche to brood over the spectacle of desolation. Thence we returned to Crane's, threading more old streets, and incidentally looking up rooms for Loveman in Columbia Heights. There was one splendidly large room for ten dollars per week in an impressive brick mansion of the Rutherford B. Hayes period—presided over by aged Mrs. Grey, who has seen better days. Loveman, however, didn't take it; and if I could afford that much rent I'd snap it up tomorrow. I can't though—and I think I'll get in touch with Crane and ask him about the smaller five-dollar-per-week rooms which he was likewise recommending to Samuelus.

Tuesday the 14th I read my principal book on colonial houses, and

in the afternoon went to interview the man to whom Houdini had given me a letter of introduction—Brett Page, head of a newspaper syndicate service whose office is at the corner of Broadway and 58th Street. Page was amazingly affable, and detain'd me an hour and a half in cordial conversation; but had nothing at all in the way of a vacant position. He said that just two sorts of places are fitted for me—assistant editorship of a trade paper, and readership or revisorship in a book publishing house. He advised me to ask Houdini for an introduction to a book publisher—which I shall do when my nerves permit me to indite a coherent epistle. In the evening I read more colonial material—as usual.

Wednesday the 15th I had lunch with S. H. downtown at that quaint basement cafeteria at Madison Avenue and 36th Street. Riding home on the subway, I was struck with the memory of weird things I had seen at twilight in Elizabethtown, and other weird things of longer ago—and at once realised that I was about to write a story. During the afternoon I laid out the preliminary design, and discussed it in some detail when The Boys met in the evening at Kirk's. Morton was absent on account of the death of his mother, which had called him back to Massachusetts, but in spite of this fact we managed to have a tolerable time till about three a. m.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday may be dispos'd of with much brevity; for I did nothing but write upon my story. It is longer than my average product, and needed much care; so that many drastic eliminations and rearrangements were perforce adopted before I could assemble it as a continuous bit of text. Sunday afternoon S. H. and I took a walk in Prospect Park, and in the evening went to the cinema, after which we bought some ice-cream at the corner candy shop and took it (i. c., not shop) home to eat. And we ate it.

Monday the 20th I was at Sonny's all day—for both lunch and dinner—and we discussed the story (then about three-fourths done) at length; Belknap making several suggestions for re-proportioning, one of which I very gratefully adopted. In the evening I did considerable work on the story, starting for bed about midnight—but having to dress again in haste the very moment I emerged from the tub, on account of the sudden gastric spasms with which S. H. had been seized whilst resting in bed after a day of general ill-feeling. It was then that we called up the hospital, as related in my epistle to A. E. P. G., and

hastened down in a taxicab whilst the grim small hours brooded over the world.

Tuesday the 21st I took many things to the hospital, returned home, and in the evening started out to meet Kleiner and Loveman downtown for a tour of the bookstalls. A subway tieup, however, delayed me hopelessly—train ahead had hotbox, and power had to be shut off half an hour—so that I missed the appointed rendezvous at Union Square. Arriving there and finding myself alone, I toured the literary emporia independently; picking up several ten-cent bargains, the most striking of which was a play of the Salem witch-craft by Mary E. Wilkins. I had a marvellously good and cheap dinner—lamb stew, apple-pie, and coffee—at a modest cafeteria in Eighth Street, (it all cost only thirty-five cents) after which I returned home, read the Salem play, and retired.

The next day—Wednesday the 22nd—I made passable coffee from written directions furnished by S. H. the day before, and rounded out breakfast with bread, cheese, and a twenty-minute egg which I cooked with vast finesse. I then visited the hospital, taking books, papers, stationery, and an Eversharp pencil I bought as a gift to the patient. . . .

Friday the 24th was much the same till evening, when instead of going home I went up to a special meeting of The Boys at Kirk's. . . . This special meeting was very delightful—even though Mortonius was absent. Loveman played his new hundred-dollar radio set—bringing to our humble clubroom a very fair vocal rendering of *The Mikado*—and McNeil prattled amiably of life's simpler things. At one-thirty we broke up—Kleiner taking the subway, whilst Kirk, (our host, who always accompanies his guests home as far as they will walk!) McNeil, and I embarked on a pedestrian journey down town. It was a great little walk down Central Park West, and toward the end a waning crescent moon arose. At 49th Street Kirk and I turned west with McNeil, and accompanied him to his lofty abole in "Hell's Kitchen", remaining and chatting till five a. m., when we adjourned to a cafeteria in Broadway near 49th Street. En route to this latter place, we indulged in considerable astronomical speculation anent a curious *duplication* of the lunar crescent which both clearly observ'd without having had the least alcoholick preparation. In the cafeteria Kirk turned the conversation to philosophy—and time vanished in a thin grey mist. Dawn paled the east, and then gilded the peaks of

the neighbouring skyscrapers; but we knew it not. Our minds were upon grave generalities; and since no officious waiter disturb'd us, we soared to the uttermost bounds of the cosmos whilst our gross clay sprawled in one-arm chairs along the tiled wall. Kirk is more intelligent than I had realised—for he is usually quiet and uncommunicative. In beliefs, he and I are exactly as one—for despite a stern Methodist upbringing he is an absolute cynick and sceptick, who realises most poignantly the fundamental purposelessness of the universe. At nine-thirty we paused for breath, and sallied forth into the fresh morning air for a tour of antiquarian exploration. First we walked to the old Jane Teller mansion at the foot of 61st Street—the one which A. E. P. G. and I visited last April. It was very beautiful with the sun on its eastern end, and we lingered long before passing under the sinister masonry of the Queensboro Bridge in quest of Sutton Place—the reclaimed district of sumptuous neo-Georgian houses, courts, and gardens on a high terrace above the East River. . . .

Thence we return'd to the busy streets; plodding along philosophically, washing our clayey hands at a convenient hydrant, and exploring an alluring car-barn in Eighth Avenue, where among more modern vehicles we found a splendid old converted horse-car (like the old Olneyville and Market Square white cars) used as a work-car. At Times Square we lunched at the Automat (vide sheet III, side 2) where Leeds and I lunched on a former occasion, my fare this time being macaroni, potato salad, cheese pie, and coffee. From this filling station we repaired to 40th Street to inspect the American Radiator Company's building—the new black and gold Dunsanian skyscraper design'd by the Pawtucket architect—and for the first time explored the interior. The basement is a dream of picturesqueness and spectral charm—crypt under crypt of massive vaulted masonry . . . terrible arches on Cyclopean columns, black *things* and haunted niches here and there, and endless stone steps leading down . . . down . . . down . . . to hellish catacombs where sticky, brackish water drips. It is like the vaulted space behind the entrances to some ancient amphitheatre in Rome or Constantinople, or some ghoulish tomb-nightmare not to be imagined save in visions of nameless drugs out of unfathomable Ind. . . .

Saturday I also chronicled to A. E. P. G.—yea, that and Sunday too, though perhaps I didn't mention that on the latter day I finished my story at one fell swoop. . . .

. . . . . Sechrist and I stopped first at the Anderson Galleries, Park Avenue and 59th Street, which A. E. P. G. will remember well, since she and I saw an auction there last March. A friend of Sechrist's—John M. Price—is employed there in an editorial capacity—preparing catalogues etc.—and he show'd us over the place most courteously. . . . If he could help me find out how to apply for a position in the Anderson Galleries—as Sechrist thinks he might—he would virtually save my life! I could do the Anderson work very well—in fact, Loveman long ago suggested how well-suited such a job would be to me. I think I'll get over to Price's tonight if I can finish this letter in time—though Pegāna knows I need a haircut first, the last having been the day A. E. P. G. left—Sept. 27.

Yr. aff: nephew and obt. Servt: H. P. L.

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AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS AND OTHER NOVELS

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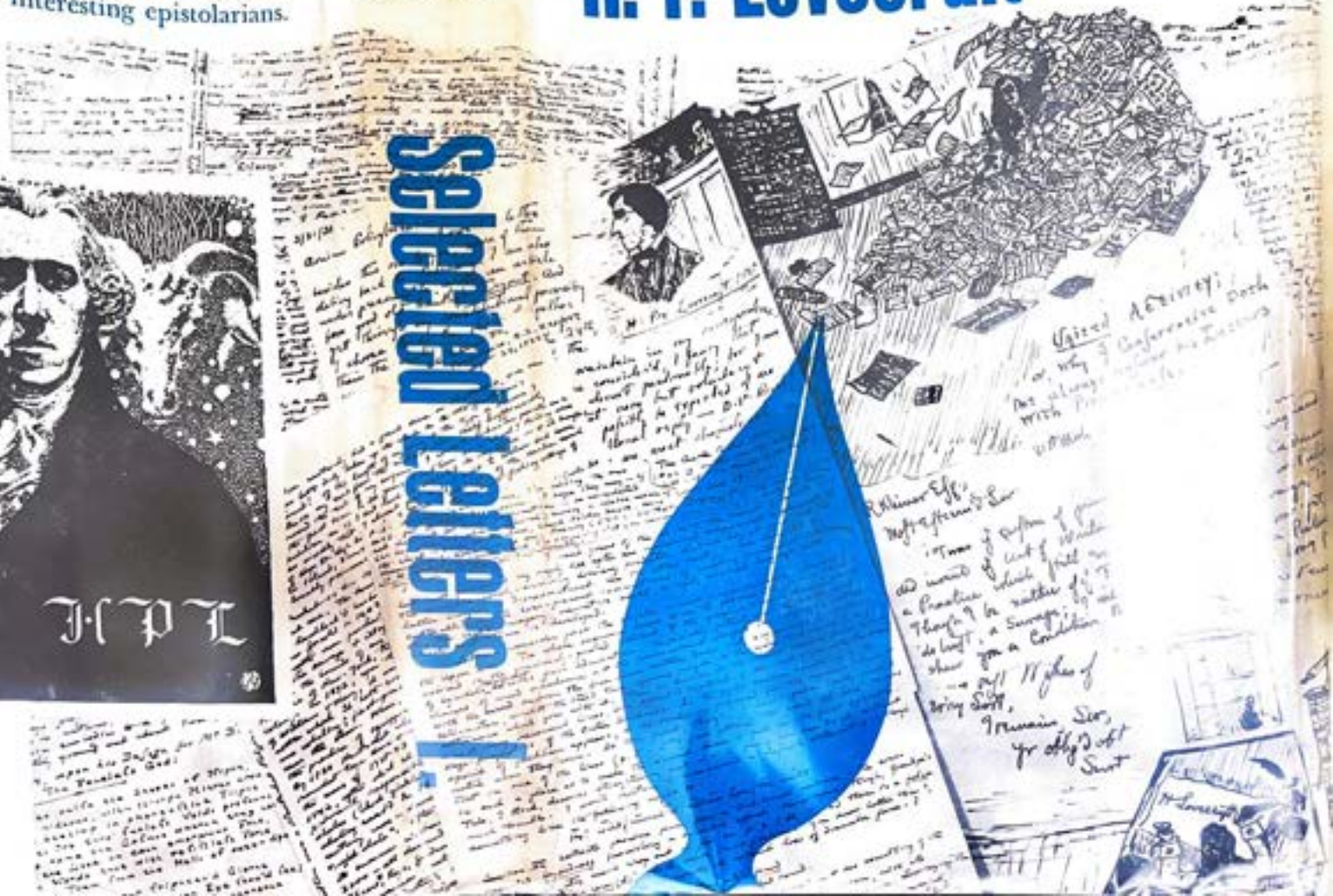
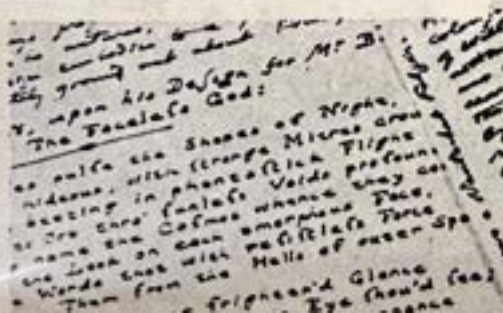
Selected Letters

H. P. Lovecraft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